

月夜涙

ill. 三弥カズトモ

お菓子職人の 成り上がり

Novel Tsukiyo Rui Ill Miya Kazutomo

天才パティシエの
領地経営



Upstart Pastry Chef

– Territory Management of a Genius Pâtisserie –

- Volume 1 -

Vow and Golden Madeleine Arnold

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[Isecai Translation]

- STORY -

Kurt was born to a poor Baronetcy of Arnold.
He was a genius pastry chef in the previous world.

While increasing the wealth of his fief as the feudal lord, he aims for his past unfulfilled dream, to become the greatest pastry chef in the world.

Making honey, building orchards with elves, trading, he gathers ingredients for his pastries, those which give a whole new taste never seen before in the different world...

Huge profit from selling special products, extremely high praise from the ducal house as temporary pâtissier, the shop that he builds in the capital city becoming a big hit!

This is a sweet tale of pastries and being surrounded by kind people.

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ヨルグ・アルノルト



ファルノ・フェルナンデ



ティナ



クルト・アルノルト

アルフレート・フェルナンデ

「私は、ファルノ・フェルナンデ。
フェルナンデ家の三女です。
以後、お見知りおきを」





「無駄だね、
そんな小細工じゃ
勝てないよ！」



「俺はもう
おまえに負けない。
負けてやらない」

「クルト様、
さっそく頂いて
よろしいですか？」

「ぜひ、食べてくれ」



Prologue

Kurt's Daily Life

I want to be the best pastry chef in the world. That is my dream. Even if I die, this wish will never change.

Or so I thought... but I could never guess that my dream would still be the same even after being reborn.

I died, then I was reborn as the son of a poor family in another world. However, even now, I'm still aiming to become a pastry chef.



Under the showering morning sunshine, I wield a spear in an open space.

Stab, stab, I put precise intention in each move. With my flowing strength and breath, I polish myself, scraping off the useless elements from each stab.

I'm always training like sharpening blades. It was simply nothing but polishing myself continuously to become sharper, more flexible. Spear-training is the destiny of those who were born in the Arnold family.

"Kurt-sama! I brought you some breakfast."

Around the time when I settled down, a lone girl came approaching. She's my personal servant, a girl with distinctive silver hair and fox ears in the same color. I've always unconsciously thought of her as a child, but recently, she has gradually grown up to become a woman, which startled me.

"Thank you. You're a great help, Tina."

I take out a sandwich from the picnic basket that she brought with her. The sandwich is a simple dish made from rye oat bread and cheese inside, but I can taste the attentiveness to details. It's delicious. Giving the finishing touches of a casual dish to become a delicacy is the hardest thing to do.



Exactly when I felt thirsty, Tina already took out a water container, pouring tea into a wooden cup. The cool tea eased up my warmed up body comfortably.

“Yes, today’s food is just as pleasant as usual. Thanks to Tina’s meal, I can always do my best.”

I rustle her hair. The sensation from her silky hair and fox ears is truly pleasant.

“Hmph, Kurt-sama! You’re treating me like a child again!”

“But you’re still a child, right?”

“A beastkin becomes an adult really fast!”

I’m 15 years old, Tina is 13. Just as she said, beastkin grow up really fast. That’s why even though she’s just 13, her charms have become apparent already.

“Because I’ve known you since you were so small, I can’t help but to always treat you like a child.”

She wasn’t even 10 when I met her, merely a child at that time. Things happened, and now it has already been three years since I picked her up and brought her to my house. The thought of her growing up into this beautiful girl never passed my mind back then.

“Well then, shall we go? Everyone is waiting.”

“Ah, Kurt-sama, please wait for me!”

As I walk away in quick steps, Tina follows me in a hurry.

Let's work hard today as well.



I'm Kurt Arnold, the eldest son in the Baronetcy of Arnold. The Arnold family serves as a vassal to the Federal Empire.

The territory of the Arnold Baronetcy encompasses a vast land in the northernmost border of the Federal Empire, but there's a wide mountain range of backwoods region beyond. While the Arnold family protects the Federal Empire from monsters and enemies from the north, this fief's livelihood comes from land reclamation and increasing harvest quantity.

The population amounts to approximately 500 people, spread out in five villages. Being entrusted with the newest pioneering village, I'm leading around 50 settlers to advance in land reclamation.

Last year, the first stage of the reclamation was finally done, as we crossed a field which could yield agricultural products. Growing wheat is the duty allocated to women and children.

Right now, I've arrived at my destination. This land is still a mess. Weeds are popping up everywhere, while rocks are rolling about. We've cut down the trees, but there are tree stumps all over the place. We're turning this into a farming field.

Muscular men have already gathered to start working. These are the people of my fief of whom I'm really fond.

"Oh, Young Master. You've arrived!"

"Young Master, we're saved! There's an annoying stump that we can't pull out at all!"

"No, an injured person is more urgent! Please excuse me, Kurt-sama. That Abel has his arm nearly done over, would you please take a look at it?"

These people rushed over in ragged breath as soon as my figure is visible to them.

This is the front line of our reclamation duty. In the already reclaimed land, the women and children are growing provisions, while the men work to clear up more plots of land. I listen to each and every one of them, then sort the tasks in a priority list.

“That tree stump is impossible for anyone else, so can you tie a rope around it? I’ll be aiding the injured person for the time being.”

“Young Master, I’ll leave it to you!”

“As expected, Young Master is really dependable.”

The men who are proud of their strength are praising me one by one, leaving the stubborn tree stump to me. This slender, 15 year old me. There’s a secret to that.

“So, where’s the injured person?”

“He’s resting in the shade of a tree over there.”

“Let’s hurry.”

I follow one of the workers approaching a youth who leans on the trunk of a big tree. He’s pressing down a piece of cloth, which is stained by blood.

“Are you alright, Abel?”

“Kurt-sama, forgive me for being a burden. I think there’s *hematoma*.”

“It’s alright. Injuries will always be a part of the job. Show me the wound.”

Abel pulls off the cloth he pressed on his arm before, confirming the wound. It’s deeper than I imagined.

“It seems like it must be stitched. I’ll stitch the wound.”

“I’m really sorry to trouble you...”

I open the first aid box that I’ve prepared before. First, I let him chew on a hygienic piece of cloth so he won’t bite his tongue. Then, I wash over the wound’s surface with a strong alcohol. I stitch the wound with a needle, then roll the bandage around it until it’s completely wrapped.

“Abel, it’s alright to go home today. Until the wound is closed, take a three day rest. Don’t do any physical job or your wound will reopen. After about a week, I’ll remove the thread and re-examine it.”

“I’m indebted to you, Kurt-sama.” Abel bows his head down.

I was aware that people around me were staring at my hands in deep interest, as stitching wounds was something truly rare. As I finish the deed, everyone opens their mouths simultaneously.

“That’s really skillful. The wound is deep, but he can stop the bleeding in a short time.”

“Young Master is amazing. He gives appropriate instructions on the reclamation project and shows deep knowledge in medical treatment!”

“From the tax gathered from everyone, we can eat proper meals. Doing my job to this extent is a natural thing to do.” With blushing cheeks, I speak modestly.

Since it’s considerably dangerous, doctors won’t come to this kind of remote region. Even so, there are many people who are wounded on-site or due to their work. I’m doing self-studies so that I can become everyone’s strength, even if it’s just a little. If I can be useful, I’ll proudly do it.

“Young Master, you are the only one who can say that, you know? The others, they can only squeeze and squeeze us to give them taxes without doing anything.”

“Yet Young Master cannot inherit the title of the next Feudal Lord, huh?”

“Hey, you!”

The words that some people murmured in passing are being rebuked by the others. And the people who said they wanted me to succeed closed their mouths as soon as they said it.

I laughed bitterly... Most likely, my younger brother will succeed the Arnold Baronetcy instead of me. I have a crucial flaw and I can’t reach it with my own power. The reason why the last worker warned the other one must be about this. However, I haven’t given up.

“Don’t mind it. I’m the one who understands it the most.”

“But, Young Master.”

“Speak no further. More importantly, let’s continue our job.”

They've showed a bad attitude, then on the other hand, they feel bad about it. The air is tense. To neutralize the situation, we head over to the problematic tree stump. A rope is properly tied all over it.

I slowly close my eyes, circulating my mana... Mana, the magic power of the chosen ones. By simply letting it circulate, a man can strengthen his physical abilities or increase his self-healing power.

Among the chosen ones, it seems a few of them will come out in the open about their ability to use magic. However, regretfully, I couldn't reach that mental state yet.

Confirming that the mana has reached the necessary level, I take the rope in my hand, then pull it forcefully. I can feel a strong resistance, but my strength can still increase as well.

Finally, the tree gives out. There are loud echoing rounds of applause around me. I laugh proudly, and they respond to it.

Today's reclamation is doing fine as well.

Chapter 1

The First Step to Sweets Making

The noon passes.

I mingled with the workers and continued working on the reclamation. By doing this together, a person's labor lessens and I can deal with any trouble that happens on the spot.

"Everyone, I brought your lunches!!"

With her silver hair and fox ears swaying in the wind, Tina shows up with the women villagers. In their hands, there are picnic baskets filled with plenty of bread.

"Everyone, that's our lunch! After eating, let's work a little more!"

""OooooH!""

The workers run to the women. Having done nothing but physical labor, of course they would feel hungry. They practically devour the simple freshly baked salted bread with dried blueberries. Even though the bread is modest, slowly and carefully hand-kneaded bread is delicious.



With this, we can pull out our best effort in the afternoon as well.



“Young Master, see you tomorrow!”

“Young Master, thank you again for today!”

“My, when Kurt-sama arrived, our jobs went really well. We feel safe even if someone’s hurt. We can even eat meals. We’re really grateful!”

I wave my hands towards the people who bid their farewells one by one. It’s still around 3 PM, but our job today is finished. Doing reclamation means dividing the labors so that we could have more food to eat in the future. If it’s only the wheat grown by the women and children, the fief’s population will starve. That’s why, we have an early round up, so that we have time to hunt and forage in the mountains and rivers.

This area has abundant natural resources. Everyone in this village is blessed by not having to worry about filling their stomachs.

However, in order to have an early round up, we have to advance efficiently. It’s exactly because everyone does their jobs well that we can finish up early.

The neighboring village used to be the most advanced village in reclamation, but since our village surpassed it, they can only advance further to take back that first place. However, I heard that since their work slowed down, they couldn’t eat satisfying meals.

“Good job today, Kurt-sama.”

Tina ran over and gave me cold water. I gratefully accept it. The water is more delicious than usual. I can taste a subtle acidity. This is the source of the deliciousness.



“This water, it’s delicious.”

“I received cowberries from the village ladies for Kurt-sama. I tried squeezing and mixing it. Everyone from this village seems to respect and feel grateful to Kurt-sama. I feel proud as Kurt-sama’s maid.”

“It was really tough for you at first, though.”

It’s been three years since I started managing this pioneering village. At first, there were insults and gossips when I came to be the village head as the eldest son of the Arnold family.

“All is thanks to Kurt-sama’s best efforts!”

I feel a little embarrassed. The works I’ve been doing for three years is finally acknowledged. Doing better in advancing than any of the other villages is my pride.

“Thank you, Tina. You do know that you don’t have to go out with me, right? You work for the Arnold family. Helping with these things aren’t within your duties. You can just do housework inside the house. Shouldn’t you return to the main village’s mansion? It’s inconvenient to be in this pioneering village, right?”

“I don’t want that. I work for Kurt-sama, not for the Arnold family. Wherever you are, that’s the place I want to be at.”

After saying that, Tina opens out her arms. I take those hands.

The eldest son of a baronet. If stature is all it’s about, I’m desirable. However, my younger brother Jörg is the one who’ll inherit everything.

This is because I’m not an existence who can become “a certain genius”. The other servants desperately try to curry favor with my younger brother and avoid getting involved with me. Tina is the only one who actively reaches out to me.

“Rather than me, isn’t it better to curry favor with my brother Jörg?”

“No way. I love Kurt-sama.”

“In the near future, whether I’ll be expelled from this house or not will depend on Jörg’s assistance. He might not be able to see me as someone favorable to get involved

with.”

In the family, there will be only one person who inherits the noble title. The one who doesn't inherit the Baronet title won't have a bright future. I'm making arrangements so that, at least, it won't turn out as such, but this is still an undoubtedly dangerous situation.

“It doesn't have anything to do with that. Even if you're not an Arnold, Kurt-sama is Kurt-sama. If Kurt-sama is expelled from the family, let's go to a town together! We can start our second life there! I haven't touched any money you've given to me until now. If it's just you alone, I'll show you that I can take care of you, Kurt-sama.”

I understand from her voice that Tina is 100% serious.

Honestly...

“Don't say stupid things... But, well, even if I go to a town and do a common job, if I'm with you it might be fun too.”

My imagination ran on its own. Throwing away everything, living not as Kurt Arnold, but just as Kurt, towards a future together with Tina.

“It will be fun.”

“But, I can't. I've come this far already. I have a dream. To make my dream come true, I *have* to be here. It's alright, even though I can't inherit the feudal lord title, I'll arrange everything so this village will gain its freedom.”

It's not like I've given up to be the feudal lord. I will strive until my last breath.

“Kurt-sama's dream can't be fulfilled if not here, indeed... But, Kurt-sama, I was relieved when I heard that you were staying in this village. Let's go to our usual place immediately. Look, to our secret place. It's time to see the fruit of our efforts.”

“Yeah. You're right. Let's go. The first step to make my dream come true.”

Tina laughs. I get pulled into laughing too.

I have three secrets. First, I have the memories of being born in Japan and aiming to be the best pâtissier in the world. Second, I'm still aiming to become the best pâtissier

in the world, in *this* world. Third, in order to fulfill my dream, I will make a secret base with Tina.

We will clear out the forest and claim the open fields. The whole land will become flower fields. That will become the secret base to make my dream come true.

To make wonderful pastries, superb ingredients are necessary.

Chapter 2

Raspberry and Honey

The flower garden is covering one side of the forest that has been cleared out. There are small and cute white flowers sprouting on canes as tall as a person which are planted here. These are raspberries. Tina and I created this garden by planting the split root and crown of the wild raspberry canes from the forest.

“Wow, Kurt-sama. They are so pretty!”

Tina lets out a high pitched voice in excitement, admiring the garden in front of her. Turning around with a smile, Tina who has been assisting me in this garden looks pretty too.

“Indeed they are. The flowers are wonderful too, but soon we can harvest the raspberries. Exciting, isn’t it?”

“Yes! I love sweet and sour raspberries!”

We didn’t create this garden to admire flowers. The Arnold family’s governed land is poor. The new village I govern is even poorer. In such cases, there’s no time to raise ornamental flowers.

Then, why on earth would we grow these plants? The reason is obvious: to fulfill the dream of becoming the best pastry chef in the world. Raspberries can become sweets’ ingredient, but that’s not my only goal. Raspberries are a perennial plant that can be harvested twice a year, meaning they can be found growing wild in this mountain, so they are strong against sickness and insects, and easy to handle.

In the corner of this garden, we’ve lined up ten wooden boxes around 50 cm tall. In the bottom part of the wooden boxes, there’s a passage used by bees, which are coming in and out busily.

“The bees are just as happy with the raspberries. They suck a lot of nectar.”

“Raspberry flower’s nectar is sweet. The honey produced from raspberries will be

delicious and have a refined sweet taste.”

Tina and I have been working on beekeeping. Contrary to Japan, sweet flavors in this world are extremely precious. I can't obtain the first indispensable ingredient in sweets: sugar. Other than sugar, sweetness can come from fruits, or honey. The first one is highly influenced by seasons, but honey is sustainable.

Unless I can get a stable source of honey, there's nothing I can do. Luckily, there are wild honey bees in my fief. I made the best use of my beekeeping experience back in Japan. Since my parent's home's livelihood in Yamanashi were orchards and beekeeping, my knowledge was more than sufficient.

I've thought about collecting honey without working on beekeeping, but it's difficult to find wild nests. We have to crush the nest every time we collect honey. The number decreases startlingly fast if we do it too often. Besides, there's another problematic issue: we can only collect a small amount of honey from wild nests to begin with.

“Tina, are you ready?”

“Yes, Kurt-sama!”

We put on hemp clothes that covers our whole bodies. They're heavy enough to protect us from bee stings and they mask the scent that the bees hate. The honey bees have a calm temperament and won't aggressively assault humans themselves, but they will come rushing to attack anyone who gets close to their hive.

We approach the wooden boxes carefully. Hundreds of bees come swarming around us. I ignore them and take off the lid of the wooden box. The bees were startled and vigorously flew out to the sky in an instant. I stretch my hand into the box to push through those bees.

Inside the box, there are ten wooden frames place in equal intervals. Each frame contains honeycombs. I take out one honey frame. There are countless numbers of hexagonal sacs just like in a natural bee nests. Inside them, there are pupae and larvae... as well as a great amount of accumulated honey, proven by how a honey color coats the wax.

With a brush, I remove the bees clinging to the comb.

“The honey is gathered at last.”

Tina gulps and purrs. She has been waiting for a very long time.

“It takes a very long time, doesn’t it?”

We started this beekeeping activity three years ago. The first year was a disaster. We did find a wild bee nest, then moved the queen bee and worker bees to our wooden box, but they were totally annihilated due to bad workmanship of the box.

Afterwards, we remade the wooden box over and over again without feeling discouraged. Through trial and error, somehow we reached the point of enabling honeycombs to form inside.

From then, the colony got larger. It was good that we succeeded in increasing the number of bees, but since the number of worker bees weren’t enough, the honey was used to breed. We couldn’t harvest it.

First, we devoted ourselves to increasing the number of bees by adding more hives. However, since we didn’t prepare the countermeasures against cold weather, once winter came, the bees were totally annihilated.

We started the second year by increasing the number of bees in the same method. The bees could get through winter somehow. Moreover, in order to reduce the food insufficiency from the increased number, we planted a flower garden near the boxes. If the bees had to look far for nectar, even the worker bees would end up feeding on it instead. By preparing plenty of food nearby, the amount of honey preserved in the hives would dramatically accumulate.

Then, today, we’ve finally reached this point.

“How is it, Kurt-sama? Is it good enough?”

“It’s a success. The honeycombs are filled to the brim. Look, you can see right now how it’s dripping. It looks great.” I answer while taking out the tool to adjust the bee combs on the side of the hive.

The tool is called an extractor. It is shaped like a drum, with a metal fitting to enable the honeycombs to be fixed vertically inside... The principle sounds simple, but it’s actually complicated. Still, we could build it somehow.

Inserting the honeycomb frame in a snug fit, I cut off the honey wax which clings to

the cap first, with a knife. Honey turns into wax and naturally functions as a hard cap. After I cap off the honey, the golden-colored syrupy honey oozes out, piling up at the bottom of the extractor.

“Well then, I’ll start.”

There is a handwheel handle on top of the extractor. When I spin it, the inner part of the hardening honeycomb rotates, which causes honey to steadily flow from the centrifugal force.

It’s a primitive method. The hive gets air-compressed and the honey is thoroughly extracted. There certainly are other ways to take the honey. However, they would end up breaking the beehive. By using centrifugal force, I can take out the honey and reuse the hive.

After returning the honeycomb into the beehive, the bees come flying back too. We can harvest again next year this way. It’s a hard labor for bees to make a hive. If we let them rebuild it from scratch, they would need to allocate more time to breed worker bees. They won’t have time to stockpile honey and the amount of honey we could harvest next year would be greatly reduced.

Basically, after extracting the honey, I return the honeycomb into the hive and come back later with a new comb. I work on the whole hives. Tina switches with me when I get tired in the middle of the process.

“Whoa, there’s really a lot in there, Kurt-sama! It’s the first time I’ve seen this much honey!”

With sparkling eyes, Tina’s tail is swinging around. In this era, acquiring honey is a real treat. Even if we’re scouring the forest all day long without rest, there’s no guarantee that we’ll find a wild bee nest. And even if we do, there’s only a small amount of honey preserved inside the nest.

“Yes. Finally, we get the result of our hard work. Honestly, I thought that it was impossible so many times.”

For two full years we couldn’t harvest any honey. Tina had been a great help all along. We change places to collect the honey oozing out from a single wooden box and throw off the stuffy clothes.

“Can I lick it?!”

“Wait for a while. I’ll finish up real soon.”

I went and return with a huge bucket. Then, I put on a coarse fabric as a filter. Honey that has just been poured out from the hives contains rubbish, larvae, carcasses, husks, fragments of combs and other stuff mixed inside. I clean the honey in one go this way. If I don’t do this, the honey won’t be edible. Then, finally, the honey is collected. There’s about 13 liters of honey from a single wooden box. This feels great.

“Now, let’s give it a taste.”



Tina and I dip our fingers into the honey. The honey stickily coats our fingers. Then, we lick it off.

Sweet. So sweet that my cheeks are loosening up. I can taste a hint of sourness, is it because this is the honey made from raspberries? Tina holds both of her cheeks, making high-pitched sounds that doesn't sound like a human's voice, then shows the best smile she has. Seems like she really likes it.

"We should collect from the rest of the boxes tomorrow. Let's go home now. I want to make sweets with this honey right after we get back."

"Whoa, Kurt-sama's sweets! I'm excited!"

Tina's eyes sparkle, with her tail swinging happily.

"I'm going to make amazing sweets, sweeter than anything you've tasted before. Look forward to it."

"That... I'm so happy I can die now."

Geez, Tina sure likes to exaggerate. The sweets I've been making for Tina only use wild grapes or *akebi* fruits from this mountain. Although they carry a hint of sweetness, I think they are still not enough to be called as sweets. However, I've obtained honey now. First-rate quality honey at that, even.

I haven't shown off my skills in a long while.

I can make real sweets!

Now, as the first step to make my dream in this world come true, let's bake the best sweets I can do.

Chapter 3

Honey Cookies of the Beginning

Tina and I harvested the honey with huge effort. We returned to our village with a water container densely packed with that honey.

Our house is a shabby looking small room erected on the ground.

As we're reclaiming new lands, naturally building settlements was done in a hurry. Quantity is prioritized, resulting in similar buildings anywhere in the pioneering village. Even if I'm the eldest son of a Baronetcy, I don't have more luxury than the others.

However, this is enough. I'm together with Tina, and we're sheltered from the wind and rain. I don't wish for anything more.

"Huft, we've finally arrived at home. This water jug is really heavy, but it's the kind of heaviness that makes me happy!"

"You're right, since it proves that the container is fully packed with honey."

Both of us laugh together. From now on, we can harvest a lot of honey every year without worry, the reward of our three years worth of effort.

Next year, let's add more bees and flowers. It's true that beekeeping is the start of my dream, but it can turn into money too. I have gone to a big town, which is extremely rare in the south. At that time, I saw honey lined up in the shops there, which had reasonably good price. Selling honey as it is should be good enough, but if we could sell special sweets products on top of it, our profit will definitely skyrocket.

"Now, I'm making sweets from the honey we harvested today. Since we're hungry, let's make something that won't take much time."

"Should I help you?"

"I don't want you to."

She giggles. “As I expected, you won’t let me help you in making sweets. Then I’ll tidy up around the house while waiting.”

Tina leaves the place while still wearing a smile. I rely on her for our daily meals, but sweets is the only thing I couldn’t hand over. From the start to the end, not doing everything by myself is inexcusable. Flour measurement, how many stirs and how much power, how long to bake and setting the heat level, the most trivial mistakes could become fatal in sweets making.

There’s also the air temperature, humidity, and the ingredients’ condition. Those delicate differences alter the most suitable way to work with them. I couldn’t hand it over to someone else.

“Now, shall we begin?”

I decided to make cookies. Letting her wait too long would be too pitiful. Baking cookies won’t take that much time.

First, I put firewood into the stone hearth on my right. This should be done first because it takes time to increase the hearth’s temperature.

From the outside, I could hear thumping sounds. Tina should be chopping some firewood there. She works hard for me. I have to make the sweets as the reward for her hard work.

I take out wheat flour from the sack, then I put it through a net-like sieve. Actually, wheat flour has different grain sizes. I need to only use the small grains, making it hard to form separate lumps and easy to mix with air.

I do that twice, returning the remaining grain into the sack. There’s no way I’d throw them away; they’re simply not suitable for sweets but they’ll still get eaten later on.

Then, I swap the sieve with a bowl to contain the fine flour. I lick some honey, identifying the sugar content. It’s about 75%. The mixing ratio between this honey and water should be 9 : 0.7 to make the best cookies. Using a ladle, I scoop the water and mix it with honey. First rate chefs have senses in both arms. They know the exact gram unit just by scooping with a spoon or ladle.

I lick to taste the water-diluted honey. The preparation is superb.

“Tastes good. Indeed, using that flower is the right choice.” Once again, I felt satisfied by the honey.

The honey’s taste obviously depends on the variety of the bees, but it also comes from the taste of the flower’s nectar they consume. Fundamentally, once the bees collect from a flower, they will keep sucking from the same one. Thus, I can control the taste to some extent by choosing the flowers they suck on.

Choosing raspberries doesn’t merely come from their ability to bloom twice a year and their strength against sickness. The huge factor is that they make honey without any peculiar taste and can be used in most sweets.

...As an experiment, I have another facility located separately with some hives to let the bees suck on different flowers so that I could find the best flavor. But that’s for another time.

“Now, I’m sure we still have some butter.”

I take some butter out of the bottom of the shelf. In a settler’s village, butter is a valuable item. There are few domesticated goats. This butter is made from their milk.

Since there’s not enough for the whole village’s daily use, each house takes turns to get some milk. I turn the milk into butter and store them. I only take the amount that I need and warm them up near the fire.

If I use cold butter, they won’t mix well with the wheat flour, but if I warm them up too much, the flavor will fall. The prescription is crucial. I also warm the mixture of water and honey at the same time. If I add a cold mixture into the melted lukewarm butter, it won’t mix well either.

“Well then, I’ve finished the preparation.”

Finally, I’m making the sweets. First, mix the butter and honey with water. Then, add flour and knead it by hand. The essential part of making cookie dough is to avoid kneading too long. If I knead it longer than necessary here, the butter will melt from my body warmth and lose its flavor, the viscosity will have more gluten, it will break apart and lose its texture, then become a flat firm dough of *senbei*, rice cracker.

So it won’t become lumps in short time, I have to take care to mix it thoroughly. Even though cookies are simple, they’re actually profound. The sensation takes the image

of cutting through something.

“I should rest it for a bit.”

It's important to rest the dough for about 30 minutes in shaded place. While resting the dough, I write up the report about pioneering advancement of the village for my father, the feudal lord. This is my obligation as the village head. I must periodically report our progress.

“This should be enough... Well then, it's about time.”

By the time I finished the report, the cookie dough has turned into a good shape. I put it on top of a cutting board.

I must stretch it thinly with a rolling pin. With the wheat flour of this quality, 4 millimeter thinness should be appropriate. This depends on the ingredients used.

It's important to be careful, but the more I touch the cookie dough, the more its flavor will fall. For example, after I cut the dough, the remaining dough is going through kneading and stretching again. However, due to the kneading, gluten will form and the crispiness will decline. I've seen the method to roll and smash the remaining dough, but I think to do that to cookies is blasphemy.

As a general rule, I can only touch the cookie once: when I'm stretching the dough. And that is to make the thinness perfectly uniform, to prevent uneven browning. Failure is unforgivable.

“Yosh, it looks good.”

I cut the stretched dough into square portions using a stone kitchen knife. The truth is, I really want an iron set of cookwares, but I'm holding back since iron is still very valuable and thus highly priced.

I line up the cut cookie dough on a stone plate in equal space. Then, I put the stone plate with cut cookies on top in the well heated hearth. The optimal temperature to bake cookies is 170 degrees Celsius. In this era, I have to maintain it by adjusting the firewood in and out.

It's a tremendous effort. I can't take my eyes off even for a second. It takes about 10 minutes until the cookies are baked. I devote myself to the fire, concentrating all my

nerves.



“Huff, it’s done.”

Around the time the cookies are done baking, I was drenched with sweat. Even a simple pastry like this needs hardship with this world’s civilization level. However, I could counterbalance that hardship.

I take out the cookies from the hearth. The baked cookies come out in a beautiful light brown (*kitsune*) color. The fragrant savoriness of butter and alluring sweet smell of honey blend together, filling and spreading in the air.



“Woow, it smells really good.”

Suddenly, a voice call out from my back, making me startled. Without being noticed, Tina was already behind me.

“You surprised me. Since when?”

“I’ve finished chopping the wood for a while and returned here since. I’ve been watching the hearth and Kurt-sama who was looking after it.”

“It’s better if you call out to me.”

“*Muu*. But whenever I call Kurt-sama when you’re making sweets, you’re always mad at me.”

“Ah well, that’s true.”

I shouldn’t get mad when I get called in the middle of making sweets where a millimeter difference of your grip can ruin everything.

“And also, Kurt-sama’s serious looking face is so cool. I wanted to keep looking at that face.”

“It’s embarrassing to hear that.”

Right as I said that, there was a cute growl from her stomach. When I look at Tina, her face turns deeply red with her fox ears fluttering down.

“Uh. Uhm, Kurt-sama. I’m so sorry. That’s because I can smell something really delicious, so.”

I’m chuckling from how cute she’s acting.

“Ah, no, it’s all right. I can tell how much you’re looking forward to my sweets. Then, let’s wait no further and give it a taste.”

Tina’s eyes sparkle from my words...

“Yes!” She gives an excited reply.

Chapter 4

Dream as Sweet as Desserts

“Sweets, sweets, delicious sweets~♪”

Tina twirled around as she brought a plate with cookies piled up on top of it, then placed it on the table. On the table, there are wooden cups filled with water, a pile of cookies on the plate, then wild plant and jerky salad with walnut sauce.



Since it's a poor village, we can't exactly eat cookies as dessert after meal. The cookies become today's main staples instead of bread. I looked at Tina who was in a good mood. I feel happy just by looking at her.

“Now, Kurt-sama.”

“Shall we?”

Tina and I sit down side by side. We reached this point after many twists and turns.

When we lived in the mansion of the main village, we couldn't eat together like this. The masters ate with the masters, the servants ate together with the servants.

I invited her to eat together with me as soon as we arrived in this village, but Tina grumbled about how unthinkable it was for her, a servant, to eat together with me, her master. It took me three months to persuade her into eating with me.

And then, we started eating face to face, but one day, with a deep red face, Tina asked if she could eat beside me. With a sweet voice, she said that in that way, she would feel Kurt-sama closer to her. After that, we ate side by side. Indeed, I could feel her closer this way.

“Is anything wrong, Kurt-sama?”

Tina calls out to me who didn't say my meal prayers even after some time has passed. Her petite frame sitting by my side and looking at me with naturally upturned eyes. How terribly cute.

“No, it's nothing... I just remembered some old memories.”

I clasp my hands in front of my chest.

“For the good food today, we thank the forest and god.”

Tina mirrors my hands and prayer. This comes from the state religion of the Federal Empire, the Frangetty religion. As long as we live in this country, the good men will pray before meals like this. After a few seconds of prayers, we began eating.

“What kind of sweets did you make this time?”

“Its name is cookies. I'll leave the explanation for you to taste on your own.”

Tina reaches out her hand towards the cookies, showing her hugely anticipating face. Firmly holding the cookie, she put one inside her mouth.

“Mmmmh! Mmmmmmm!!!”

With both hands on her cheeks, she groans while her legs flail around, her tail swaying magnificently. She gives the reaction of eating the most delicious thing for her. When I look at her, I feel really glad from the bottom of my heart that I made these.

The important things for a pâtissier are the cooking environment, the best ingredients, and people who love eating sweets more than anything. To say that love is the best ingredient is half right and half wrong. It's not that something will taste delicious just from love. I want to please people who eat it. If that feeling is sincere, I will put my best effort. That's why it can become delicious.

"When I chew it, a wonderful sweetness burst inside my mouth! It's not just sweet, I can also taste a strong flavor of butter, and yet the flavor is so refined. I've never felt this happy from eating something before!"

Tina reaches out for the second time. With joy filling her narrowing eyes, she chews it. A delightful crunching sound resound on my side.

I also pick and eat a piece of cookie. Inside my mouth, there's the sweet flavor from honey and richness from butter spreading. Chewing consistency and the aftertaste are also exceptional.

If I were to criticize, it would've been better if I used butter with better quality as well as wheat flour with less gluten. However, too bad that I don't have those. I've made the best that I could do with existing ingredients. In the future, when the village becomes rich, I want to collect many things bit by bit. There are many important ingredients beyond honey.

"The cookies are an easy sweets made by mixing and baking wheat flour with butter and honey. The texture is distinctly sweet and crunchy. It's a wonderful sweets where we can add walnuts and create many variations."

"Cookie, what a cute name. And, this, I can't stop taking them."

"Go ahead and eat a lot."

"Yes! Munch munch, itsh delishioush!"

Tina has forgotten me, captivated by the cookies. She always pushes her limits and behaves properly in front of me, but now she forgets those and even talks with her mouth stuffed. It's been a while since the last time I saw her act like this.

Tina stuffs more and more cookies into her mouth. Then, the cookies are all gone.

“Ah.”

Just as the last cookie disappeared, Tina looked at my face with an unrealistic apologetic face.

“I’m really sorry... Kurt-sama, since they’re so delicious, I was so engrossed that I even ate your portion...”

“It’s okay. It means you’re happy with my cookies. I’ve also eaten 2-3 pieces already.”

“Uuuh... I’m really really sorry. I’ll do anything I can in return.”

Tina apologizes fervently, as if she’s doing a *dogeza*. I won’t get angry from you eating too many cookies, though.

“Don’t mind it, because Tina is my savior.”

I’m someone who doesn’t have any hope to inherit the feudal lord’s position, without anyone ever caring about me. Tina, she was the only one who said that she loved me.

When I left the main village, everyone opposed me and said that it was impossible for me to build a village. However, Tina believed that I could, following me through the harsh circumstances. She never once complained about the beekeeping that never bore results before this year, and strongly persevered in keeping me company.

No matter how much I thank her, it won’t be enough. If Tina wasn’t here, I probably would have abandoned my dream a long time ago.

“That’s... I’m terrified. Looking from that angle, I’m able to live right now because Kurt-sama saved me. If Kurt-sama wasn’t there, I would have died a dog’s death that time.”

“Then, Tina saved me and I saved Tina. It should be fine like that, right? The cookies, they’re just something I make when I want to eat them in the first place. Oh, I know, the usual bread we feed to everyone in the village, how about I bake cookies in its stead? I suppose it’s impossible to make them every single time, but it should be all right to allow this kind of luxury once a month for the reclamation workers.”

“That sounds wonderful. I’m sure everyone will be happy! It’s really that delicious! It’s

the most delicious food I've ever eaten in my entire life!"

"I'm glad to hear that. It's a blessing for a pâtissier to make people that happy."

"Pâtissier?"

Tina showed a bewildered face. True, pâtissier should be a foreign word that she doesn't know.

"A person who's an expert in making sweets is called a pâtissier."

"Oh, so that's it. Then, Kurt-sama is the best pâtissier in the world!!"

Time slowed for me for a second. The words Tina said is the dream I could never let go.

"That's not necessarily true. If you go to a big town, there'll be numerous others who can bake even better sweets than the current me. However... I do want it. Someday, I'll be the best pâtissier in the world."

"Don't worry, Kurt-sama will definitely achieve it! I'm sure of it, because the sweets that Kurt-sama made could make me this happy."

Tina smiles. Her smiling face never fails to give me confidence.

"I feel like I can do it if Tina says so. I should make the cookies immediately for the sake of everyone in the village. Even so, Tina, it's okay to eat my portion, but I'll get mad if you eat everyone else's, you know?"

As I make that joke, Tina's face blushes and her fox ears stand in a poof.

"Hmph, so that's how you see me!"

Just like this, the debut of genuinely sweet pastries that I made in this world has made a grand finish. There are heaps of other sweets I want to make. My dream has only just begun.

Chapter 5

Once Upon a Night's Talk

“Kurt-sama, I brought you some candles!”

As the reclamation plan from next month onwards and its budget calculation were completed at last, Tina who already changed into pajamas appeared with some beeswax.

The beeswax is collected from the beehives. Inside the ten hive boxes, the bees are merrily making their nest. However, the bees make their nest bigger than they need. In those times, I shave off the hive with a knife, then the shaved nest becomes materials for beeswax. If not for that, someone poor like me won't be able to use candles. Candles are expensive.



“I'm saved. The candle is almost gone just now.”

I opened a thick book and copied the contents on a paper. I'm working on manuscripts.

The client who produces the manuscripts is from Lingrade, the best commercial city in the south of the Federal Empire. It's a request from a book store there.

Once a month, a peddler makes round to each village and fetches the progress reports for the Baronet of Arnold. By conveying to the peddler, I could pass on the books I want to write the manuscripts for. If I finish the manuscript by the next month, I entrust

them as well as the original book through the peddler. This has been going on for two years.

Since the commercial city of Lingrade gets books delivered from various countries and cities, the languages used are all over the place. When they turn out to be magic books, they're also written in codes.

It is my job to translate them and write them down in the language according to the client's wishes. Making manuscripts becomes a good source of income. My manuscripts have a good reputation, and despite how long it takes to send from and to a remote place, I'm happy that my job is uninterrupted.

Getting this job is was tremendous luck on my part. I once exchanged greetings along with my father to Margrave Fernande, whose citadel is located in the commercial city of Lingrade. At that time, I was curiously blessed with the opportunity to speak alone with him. From there, I was introduced to a book store he frequented, where I hit it off with the book store's manager, and reached this point.

...At that time, my father still expected things from me. That's why I could introduce myself to the marquis.

"Kurt-sama is working too hard. You're doing spear-training in the morning, reclamation at noon, and when it's finished, you're doing the beekeeping works, and once you return home, you're still doing the reclamation documenting jobs. On top of that, you're also doing the manuscripts. You'll collapse one day."

"I do this because I like it. Also, I haven't collapsed yet until now. That's why, I'm all right. I want to be able to freely use the money."

The moment I said that, Tina's cheeks puff out. Her anger is always visible from the way her silver fox ears stand rigid in a poof.

"They're all lies! For the sake of the people in the fief, you lay out lunch meals every day, you buy the wheat yourself when there's not enough, you bandage people when they're sick or hurt. Doesn't everything come from Kurt-sama's money that you make from manuscripts?!"

"Well, yes, there's that too."

The Arnold family is poor. There's not enough budget to supply everyone or to buy

medicines. Even the tools for beekeeping need money. There's some budget for reclamation projects, but they are really insignificant. That's why, I'm using the money from my manuscripts.

"It's strange how Kurt-sama has to make a huge effort by yourself!"

"That's not true. I don't necessarily make any extra effort. They're all my hobbies first and foremost. They're documents so expensive that I can't buy them even if I wanted to, and I even get money from them. Those expensive, commissioned manuscripts usually match the books I want to read. Management studies, medical books, magic art books, history books. Each and every one of them makes me happy just from reading them. When I make the manuscripts, I also end up memorizing the contents. Isn't it wonderful that everyone can be happy from the money I get from that opportunity?"

"Boohoo... There's that, but... But if Kurt-sama only thinks about other's happiness, when will you get your own?! Even though you've worked this hard, even though you have this amazing potential! But no one ever notices that, why, why?!"

Tina cried for me. For my sake.

"Tina, come over here."

I beckon Tina. As I did so, she sat between my legs on the same chair I was sitting on.

Just until recently, she was still childish, acting her age. Since she got lonely easily, I spoiled her often. At that time, as I worked on the manuscripts, I embraced her and lent her my ears as we talked. This way, I can still continue with my work while letting her get spoiled. Tina leans on me.

"It's been a while since I received this treatment. Kurt-sama, you've grown."

"That's because I'm still in my growth period. Still, I know it hasn't reached Tina's growth rate."

I'm still 15. I want to have more build and height.

"I don't mean it that way. You're becoming more and more wonderful."

"In front of a cute girl, any boy will act cool."

“That’s not true. A person as wonderful as this, there’s no one else other than Kurt-sama.”

I become embarrassed, unable to say anything. The only sound around us comes from the running quill pen. It’s not the unpleasant silence from having nothing to talk about. It’s a mysteriously warm feeling.

The night goes on this way. Let’s finish today’s work soon.

When I realized, Tina was already asleep leaning on my arm. I hold her and go to the bed, sleeping while hugging her like a body pillow. When I hug her, I’m filled with a gentle feeling. Ever since we arrived at this village, we’ve been sleeping while holding each other like this.

After enough playing around with Tina’s puffy tail, I fall asleep, ending that day.



I open my eyes. Today, I won’t be doing my daily spear training. The training will be done at night instead. If I don’t wake up early, I won’t be able to return to the main village.

Today is the one day of the month when my father, the Baronet of Arnold, returns to the main village, the day when I must report the progress level, then report how much wheat we’re able to harvest, and decide on the tax amount. Other than that, the issue of who’ll inherit the feudal lord position between me and my younger brother should get clearer.

The Arnold family is conventional. When two sons born in the family have grown into adulthood, who is more suitable to become the feudal lord will be decided in a selection ceremony. Neither personality, competence, popularity, nor achievements will decide the matter. It will be decided by one single thing.

I come out of the bed carefully so I won’t wake Tina up. I’ve decided to leave her behind. Even if she goes with me, she’ll only be greeted with displeased eyes.

“What, do you intend to leave by yourself?”

However, I was too naive. A small hand grips the hem of my shirt tight, looking at me with bitter eyes.

“Good morning, Tina.”

“I’m going as well.”

“...It won’t feel good, though?”

“I don’t want to let Kurt-sama go to that kind of place alone.”

Sheesh, this girl. I hit Tina’s head softly a couple of times.

“You’re spoiling me, but I accept that. Now hurry and get prepared.”

“Yes, Kurt-sama!”

Making a spirited reply, Tina jumped out of the bed and went to the water well to wash her face. However, she got me. If I were to go with Tina, there’s no way I’m going to show her the uncool side of me.

Chapter 6

Baronet of Arnold

“Tina, we’ll arrive at the main village soon. Hold on tight!”

“Yes, Kurt-sama!”

I went to the main village by riding a horse, galloping all the way. It’s not like there’s no carriage, but riding the horse directly is faster and less tiring for the horse. It is one of the only two horses in the settlers’ village. I must treat it well.

There’s Tina behind me, hugging me tightly and circling her arms around my waist. I believe I didn’t just imagine her rubbing her cheeks on my back once in a while. Really, what a pampered child.

At this pace, it should take no time to arrive at our destination.



Just as the noon passed, we’ve finally arrived at the main village where the mansion of the Baronet of Arnold resides. The mansion is a two-story building made from brick, elegant and completely not betraying the family’s poor condition. As I step inside the house, the servants greet me. Most of them are old women who already have difficulties in doing field work.

Employing them is for the sake of utilizing the cost of the food from people who’ve lost their physical strength, too harsh to make them work in the fields.

Tina appears smaller behind me. She doesn’t have many good memories about this mansion, if there’s any at all. I made small greetings to them before making my way through the mansion, arriving at the front of father’s office on the second floor. I knocked lightly.

“It’s Kurt. I’ve come to report the reclamation progress.”

“Enter.”

Opening the door according to Father's voice, I enter the room. Tina stays right in front of the door.

"Chichi-ue, it has been a while."

"You've come a long way, Kurt."

Father was sitting on a solid looking chair, showing a calm expression. He had a huge stature from years of tempering, but his eyes carried brilliant intelligence at the same time. I respect father greatly. He does have his stubborn parts, but he's a feudal lord adored by his people.

With a smiling face, I walk before stopping in front of him, handing over the report. Father receives the document, spreading the papers on the table, going through each one of them.

"Hm, the reclamation is doing well and splendidly. To think that it's been merely three years to pay this much tax. Even if I was to do it, I would need five years or more to reach this point. This year, the money from aiding the reclamation and the tax collected come gradually, but from this part, it'll be a surplus from next year on. I'm quite surprised."

"It's because the workers are working hard."

"It is difficult to pull out the motivation from people, much less with this small budget. You've done a good job, disregarding the fact that the fief's people can't get rewards. Then, guiding them until they show the willingness to work and make a great effort at that is more difficult. Kurt, you're an excellent son. Under your hands, the Arnold family should become greater and more prosperous."

"You're not doubting this report?"

"There are some doubts, obviously. It's all right to tell you now; actually there's someone observing your village. That report is perfectly consistent with yours. The observer highly praises you. Not only are you competent, your personality is also excellent, the ideal village head that the people adores. Your report for me also doesn't have excess nor deficiency; it's concise and precise. I value this highly."

Father praises me without restraint. I can't feel joyous from those words, because I could feel that he's not done yet.

“And that is precisely why it’s regrettable... that I couldn’t let you succeed as the feudal lord. If only you were born to some other family than the house of Arnold.”

Yes. In me, the talent that the Arnold family wishes for the most is not existent.

“*Chichi-ue*, the one who will succeed the feudal lord is not yet decided. The selection ceremony is next week.”

In the ceremony next week, who’ll become the feudal lord between me and my brother Jörg will be decided.

“You’re right. Jörg still hasn’t inherited the title yet. My mistake.”

The probability is exceedingly low. Albeit so, I never ceased to aim for that.

“Kurt, there’s something I have to tell you. Tomorrow, the marquis will come to the land you reclaimed for an inspection. Be prepared.”

“And what is his objective?”

“Your place is the newest village, yet it brings the most income. It is most suitable for an inspection.”

The Marquis is a great aristocrat who gathers every nobility from this area, including the Arnold family. They come periodically to their subordinate aristocrat’s territories to confirm their progress. Father’s main part is the development of new farmland. In that light, my settler’s village should be favorable.

“And also, Kurt. You’ve worked hard until now. After the selection ceremony, come and return to the main village. It’s no longer important to take care of that village.”

“Wha-!? What do you mean by that?”

“In this round of inspection, I will tell the Marquis that your pioneering village was built by Jörg, because Jörg is closer to being the next feudal lord. I want to give the impression of the next feudal lord’s excellence. If I present that village, he would remember Jörg better in an auspicious light. It’s also about time that Jörg begins having work experience. With his abilities, it would be improbable to start a pioneering village from step one, but if the village is already on track, it’s convenient and should become a good experience for him.”

Red color blinds my eyes from boiling anger. When I realized, I already slammed both of my hands with all my strength.



“Don’t joke with me, what about your promise?! Up until now, just what do you think I’ve been feeling!? How far I’ve piled up my efforts for the sake of building that village!!!?”

I raised my voice in anger towards my father for the first time since I was born.

“You promised me three years! You told me I could only put into work the remaining people in each village, reclaiming and turning a wasteland into a worthy village! In return, even if I don’t inherit the title, I could stay as the village head in this fief! *Chichi-ue*, you agreed to this!”

It was the vow made a long time ago. I understood that I probably wouldn’t be the feudal lord. If I couldn’t be the feudal lord, the remaining options were to aid my brother or leave the fief. I declined both. It would distance myself from my dream to be the best pastry chef in the world.

That’s why, I chose the path to become a village head, leading one village and paying taxes to the feudal lord. I would make the village rich, create ingredients for sweets, sell special sweets product. Then with the money I gain, I would collect and buy various ingredients, making even more sweets and pastries, building up my wealth until finally I would make the best pastry in the world.

For that reason, I increased the village’s wealth, even started beekeeping. I also made preparations for various other things. Even so, once my village gets confiscated, all of my efforts will turn into nothing.

“I certainly made that kind of promise. However, you’re overdoing it, Kurt. Since you’ve made it that far, there’s no move I won’t take. That village is too attractive to throw away.”

“It’s just for that!?”

“If you’re frustrated, you should become the feudal lord. Since you can’t, naturally I’m playing this move instead. Your village doesn’t belong to you. It belongs to the Feudal Lord from the Baronet of Arnold.”

Even though the talk was just over, Father had already turned around. I’m gripping my fist until my knuckles turn white.

“*Chichi-ue*, do reconsider. I couldn’t think of a case where Jörg is able to lead that

village. The only thing I see is bankruptcy.”

“It’s impossible if he’s alone. That’s what an ordinary person is. I’ll protect him. If he fails, it’s good enough that he can learn from it.”

“...Then please excuse me.”

“In the afternoon, come to the courtyard. The pre-ceremonial match will become the last one today. Kurt, win it if you don’t want to lose your village. I’m repeating myself, but you could’ve just become the feudal lord.”

...and that’s the exact thing I couldn’t do! Those are the words I swallow back down from my throat. Clinging further is useless now. I turn and leave this place behind as I feel despair.

The moment I exited the door, Tina ran up to me. Could she have guessed something from looking at my face? She just grasps my hand tight without saying anything. It heals my irritable heart a little bit. There’s still a bit of time before afternoon. I need some fresh outdoor air.

While thinking so, I walk to exit the manor. Then my eyes met with someone I dislike... Jörg, my younger brother. Average height, average build. White skin. I can’t see him as someone who trains regularly.

He’s a good for nothing who flaunts around his parents’ influence in the main village, which is considerably more prosperous than most villages in the Arnold fief.

“*Nii-san*, have you heard about it?”

“About what.”

“About handing over the village you built to me. It sounds like an okay village. Since I’ll manage it directly, it will become even better.”

I’m seething with an urge to kill from his words. Tina who has been walking by my side steps forward.

“That village was built by Kurt-sama’s hands! To hand it over to someone like you...!” Tina’s voice rises up in anger. For my sake, she gets even angrier than me. I feel happy from that.

“Heeeh. This girl is cute. So that shabby-looking brat grows up into this, huh?” Jörg’s hand tilts up Tina’s chin. Tina’s expression turns into a glare.

“You’ve piqued my interest. I’ll raise you. Together with the village, I’m taking this girl. I can’t stomach the fact that it’s a second hand from my brother, but I’ll tolerate that.”

“Rejected!”

“Why are you so mad? Be joyful. I’ll let you live a luxury more than my brother can give. I’ll buy you fashionable outfits from the city. I can even get my hands on some sweets.”

“...What a dull person. I couldn’t see how you measure up to be Kurt-sama’s brother.”

Tina wards off Jörg’s hand. Jörg looks angry and raises his fist. I protect Tina and catch the thrown fist.

“Mind your manners, Jörg. Hitting someone who rejects you is unsightly.”

“What’s this, *nii-san*? You’re opposing me, the feudal lord? How I treat my people is my own business.”

“Already playing the lording part? It’s not decided yet.”

“It’s already decided. You should have understood. Oh well, today’s match will make you realize that, if anything.”

“Even so, the selection ceremony is next week. Just do this kind of act after that.”

“I agree. Then, once I become the feudal lord, I’ll enjoy this aplenty.”

Jörg passes through after making that threat. He probably would go back to his own room.

“I have another correction. Tina isn’t a thing. She’s a human being. Even after you’ve become the feudal lord, don’t think you can act as you wish.”

“It’s a noble’s privilege to treat human as toys. You’re so stiff, *nii-san*.”

That guy is no good. He can’t become the feudal lord. Grabbing Tina’s hand, I exit the

mansion. Her hand is shivering.

“Forgive me, Tina.”

“It’s not something you should apologize for, Kurt-sama. He’s the jerk.”

“I’m happy to hear you say that. And also, thank you for being angry on my behalf. I feel like you’ve saved me a little.”

Tina’s words are dangerous, but that made me happy. No matter what happens, I want to protect her and that village. I feel that from the bottom of my heart.

The afternoon match is not just a match. It’s said to be a rehearsal of the selection ceremony. I brought in my fighting spirit now more than ever.

Chapter 7

Bloodline and Duel

It's the promised time; I came with Tina to the mansion's courtyard. My father and Jörg were already there, as well as their attendants.

"Kurt, Jörg. Let your power be seen. The selection ceremony comes next week. This is the last competition game. Proceed to fight with caution."

Jörg and I stand up in the courtyard. We brought spears. The tip of those spears are wrapped in cloth to prevent bloodshed, but they are still lethal weapons.

"Nii-san, I'm in a slightly bad mood today. Don't go easy on me."

"I've never intended to do so in the first place, Jörg."

At the top of my head, I never recall going easy on him.

"Both of you, in your positions. The match will begin soon."

The first generation of the Arnold family excelled over his fellow soldiers, raking up deeds one after another just with a single spear, acquiring a nobility rank and territory with his own hands. Therefore, the head of the Arnold family must be chosen from the one who shows the most excellent military prowess. A competition of martial arts where using mana is prohibited.

Then, due to that origin, the children born as Arnolds must train their spear arms thoroughly. The selection ceremony is a duel between grown up candidates for the next feudal lord position, the rite of the winner to be crowned as the head of the family. For the sake of mutual skill improvement, Jörg and I are matched in a duel once every two months.

"Let the match begin!"

At the sound of Father's voice, we move. Tina clasps both her hands in front of her chest, praying for my victory. This is only a match after all; there's nothing to gain from

winning this. However, the results of these pre-matches are more or less related to the psychological superiority for the actual selection ceremony.

“Here I go, *nii-san*!”

Jörg swings out his spear. One strike, just with one hand, without putting some strength in his waist, without any decent weight transfer. It’s an excessively poor hit.

But, he’s fast. Unnaturally so. I can only think that something mysterious and invisible is boosting his spear. I focus all my nerves on calculating his trajectory, then diverting the spear with both my hands. My hands are numb. I used all my strength, but this power...

“HA!”

Still, I deflected it, barely. I won’t overlook the gap that I’ve created. With the shortest distance, I run up and launch a thrust.

It’s been 10 years since I picked up my spear for the first time, practicing every single day without ever missing one session. Those practices become my flesh and blood without fail. This is the one hit from all the muscles in my body working together perfectly in a spiraling motion, gathering all my strength into a single point. The strongest, fastest blow that my current body can pull out. And yet...

“So light, *nii-san*.”

The spear that should have left a gap returns the hit in a blink. Jörg’s flippant yet troublesome spear catches up with my fastest thrust, flicking it off with ease. I understand that his strike left a center of gravity, making his spear quick to return.

But, too fast. He doesn’t use any mana, yet as if being supported by a “mysterious thing”, Jörg’s spear is unnaturally fast, unnaturally heavy.

“I see.”

I suppose it would’ve turned out like this. Using power as a momentum, rising plenty of centrifugal force, then swings sideways. If it’s stopped, this strike will be blown off easily. However, Jörg stops that one with an unperturbed face.

“*Nii-san*, you’re so skillful... Beautiful form, polished martial arts, you’re really

awesome. I can't begin to imagine how much effort you've put into this."

Jörg flippanantly releases poking thrusts. They are flippant, but every single blow contains a lethal amount of power. An irrational attack supported by this "invisible thing". If I directly receive just one blow, it'll be over. Deflecting, diverting, negating, I resist those attacks with pure skill.

However, Jörg continues to receive strike points, while I must extort the energy from my whole body. Rotating strength and stamina consumption between us are totally different. It's becoming more unfavorable for me.

In this world, there's an irrational power, working outside the boundaries of logic. Jörg has it, Father also has it. Their spears have irrational speed and strength. This is the power attained by the bloodline of Arnold family, the talent. A power I never stopped wishing for, and will never be able to reach. For the sake of making up for this irrationality, I never failed to train, tempering my body, polishing my martial arts.

Yet, still...

"You're awesome, *nii-san*, really awesome. You can handle my spear with pure skill! But you know, it's useless if you don't have the talent! *Nii-san*... You'll never reach me with that kind of cheap trick!"

Jörg proclaims his victory. He must have thought that my power has declined. My limit has come approaching. My breath is ragged, my concentration strength is also at its limit. The numbness in my hand accumulates, I no longer have the strength to grip. I couldn't defend myself against another blow.

"Good job, *Nii-san*. I'll happily take all the things you've built up."

Jörg's laughter turns deeper.

"The position of feudal lord."

For the sake of that dream, I wielded my spear everyday for ten years.

"The village you've built desperately."

For the sake of my dream to become the best pastry chef in the world, I spent three years frantically working on the reclamation day and night, and finally the village took

this shape.

“Your favorite girl.”

Tina who always supports me by my side. Whenever I feel like breaking apart, I can always put more effort since her smile is always there.

“Isn’t it regretful, my dear older brother who can do anything!? My wonderful, excellent brother. Just because of one talent you don’t have in spear, everything, every single thing will be taken from you!!”

Jörg wields his spear while being convinced of his victory. Don’t mess with me. I won’t recognize this. I don’t want to give up. I... I...

Along with my thoughts, the mana in me rages. My whole body is covered in faint green light. In that second, the sensation in my hands returns. My power is recharged. Gripping my spear tightly, I attack Jörg’s spear, sending it flying.

Father opens his mouth. “The winner, Jörg. Kurt, you used mana. You lost from breaking the rules.”

After I released the thrust in my trance, my father’s voice drags me back. Is that so? So I used mana, huh...

“Haha, *nii-san*. You surprised me. Geez, using mana like that. Wanting to win so bad to break the rules, you are so finished,” Jörg speaks aloud, showing a grin out of nowhere.

“*Chichi-ue*, Jörg, I apologize.” I sincerely bow my head, while my mind wanders elsewhere.

Father said that I used mana (*maryoku*/magic power), but he was mistaken. What I used was actually magic (*mahou*/sorcery). One in a thousand children will be born with mana. They have the gift to use mana to strengthen their body, accelerate their self recovery, as well as using earth • fire • wind • water element magic artes.

However, there will be one in a hundred children who has mana who can use Magic. Magic is the very essence of that person, a unique power. That was the power that I used.

“*Nii-san*, in the real match, can’t you stop losing from foul play?”

“I know,” I answer absentmindedly.

Father stops looking deep in thought and separated us. What made me absentminded wasn't the happiness from knowing that I could use magic, but because I was thrust by the unshakeable reality.

“Kurt-sama!”

Tina runs up to me in a rush. As I realized that, my tears naturally flowed through.

“What happened, Kurt-sama?” Tina asks worriedly.

“Tina, can I cry it off a bit?”

As I ask the question, Tina embraces me tightly. I return her embrace.

The magic I have is ^{Heal}Recovery. It floats in my mind just like that.

^{Heal}Recovery: a therapeutic healing power, recovery heal, analyzed heal, transformation heal, destruction heal.

At that moment, I healed myself and regained my grip. To heal means to return something to its normal state. In order to do that, I must know the normal state of the healing target. Therefore, this Magic grants the user the ability to see everything.

What I came to know was my own talent as well as how the irrationality of this world worked. I came to understand the secret of my father's and brother's absurd spearmanship. Even though I didn't have the talent, I always expected that if I continued to put in the effort, a talent like theirs would bloom in me.

Thinking like that, these all-seeing eyes thrust the reality to me. That the training that I did for the last ten years was all for naught. That I could never use the power that supported the spear like father's and Jörg's for my entire life. And, that if only it doesn't have to be the spear, I've always been more than capable of overwhelming Jörg.

Chapter 8

Declaration of War

Heal
Recovery, my inherent magic.

Because of that, I've become aware of the principle of this world. In this world, the capacity of an ant is already established in the form of experience levels. The sublimation of a Skill will overcome that predetermined value.

For example, if I use my eyes right now, I could notice that my father's spear aptitude is B rank, while his spear ability is level III. Whereas my brother Jörg's spear aptitude is B rank, while his ability is level I.

Aptitude is separated into S, A, B, C, D, E, F ranks, where an ordinary man's rank is D. Having B rank aptitude makes you a genius. If your rank is D, you may obtain a Skill after training earnestly for ten years. If it's B, you can master it in a year. For a father and son to have this spear aptitude means that the talent is inherited in my Arnold family.

However, my aptitude for the spear is F rank, while my spear ability is not mastered. Of course it isn't. My aptitude for the spear is the lowest class. The blessing of a spear ability is to have an Action that will do a rising correction. Jörg's spear's speed and weight are thanks to that ability.

Spear ability. Just for that one thing, Jörg surpassed my ten years worth of training. Isn't that kind of thing absurd? What are those ten years of training for...? No matter how good I am, I will always be overshadowed by that ability. Moreover, with his B-ranked aptitude, Jörg's spear ability won't stop growing. From level I to II, from II to III. Me, on the other hand, has no hope to grow anymore.

"Tina, what if, just what if you understand that everything you've been working hard for is useless, and you're helpless against it?"

I ask Tina who has been embracing me closely. I want to helplessly complain.

“...If it were me, I’ll try even harder. Putting more and more effort, and if that’s still no good, then I’ll think about another way. Working hard is not the goal, it’s just a method. For the sake of my goal, I’ll look for another way.”

“Is that so? Working hard, then finding another way, huh...?”

For what sake did I temper myself with the spear? The spear is the symbol of the Arnold family, so as the eldest son of Arnold, I wanted to be accomplished in it? Because Father told me to? No, that is wrong.

I wanted to be the best pâtissier in the world. In order to achieve that, I wanted to succeed my Arnold family. That’s why it was important for me to be chosen in the ceremony. The spear was the way to achieve that.

If the only way to win is through martial arts, then I should just throw away the spear.

“Thank you, Tina. I saw a ray of hope... and also, I’m sorry. To hug you so suddenly...”

I loosen up my embracing arms before letting her go. Tina showed regret as I did so.

“There’s nothing you should apologize for! I’m happy you’re spoiling me. Also, seeing Kurt-sama when you’re feeling down only makes me love you more. Please keep spoiling me from now on.”

Tina stands up while running her mouth with a red face. I feel like I’ve returned to my usual self. I softly brush her hair.

“Thanks to Tina, I could see the silver lining, you know?”

I will never hand over the village that I’ve built for the sake of my dream, nor will I hand Tina over. Closing my eyes, I ask myself: *What is my specialty? Aside from the spear, do I have anything to fight with?*

The answer came to me. Through my ^{Heal}Recovery, my all-seeing eyes show me clearly what my talent is. The answer is, the talent with an S-rank aptitude.

“But... will I make it on time?”

Winning against Jörg by developing an S-rank aptitude’s potential should be easy, but

it's not like it won't pose any problems. In the fighting ceremony, there's no designated weapon as long as one side wins against the other through martial arts only. Yet, the spear is the symbol of the Arnold family. If I throw that away, can I be the true successor as the feudal lord of the Arnold family?

Another issue is that there's almost no time. I only have one week to throw away the spear and learn a new weapon from scratch. Even with an S-rank aptitude, a Skill requires around a month to sublime.

The other problem is about my own feelings. Logically speaking, I know that I have to throw away the spear, but I can't bear to cut off my ten years of hard work. I don't want to render them useless. My mind sinks into a whirlpool.

"Kurt-sama, let's go home? If we stay here, Kurt-sama only looks pained."

Tina holds my hand. From her small hand, Tina relays her body warmth. This warmth opened my eyes.

"You're right. Let's go to our village."

In order to protect this warmth, what am I hesitating for? No matter what I must throw away, no matter which path I must take, I have to win.

Using my all-seeing eyes, I'm thinking in desperation. It showed me a trick that I could utilize. It was a way to increase the experience level and sublimate a Skill. But merely doing that won't be enough. Isn't there something? Anything? I have to think of a way to compress a month into a week.

In an instant, it showed my brain a Skill that I already had.

[The Fool's Desire]

When I became aware of the world, I understood everything.

The Fool's Desire: The tenacity of one without talent. Turning one impossible desire into a possibility.

* Requirement(s): Training every day earnestly against the capacity of an F-rank aptitude for more than 10 years.

* Effect(s): All the abilities will operate as if the aptitude's rank is risen by one level.

"...Haha, hahaha. So it's not useless after all. My spear."

If one without talent continues to put desperate effort, that foundation will become the "know how". Isn't that what a Skill sublimation is like? I'm the only one who can obtain an aptitude surpassing S-rank. If I missed out on training for just one day, I wouldn't have obtained this Skill. This is the fruit of my stubbornness and tenacity.

What I gained from my hard spear training is not this Skill, but something else, things that Jörg would never be able to obtain. The principle of martial arts. The body movement. Breathing. I've been learning them along with the spear.

I grasp the spear that I'm holding onto. Thank you for these past ten years. I'll take my next step forward now.

"Let's go, Tina. I'm alright now."

"Yes, Kurt-sama. Let's go back home to our village."

Tina and I walk forth hand in hand.



When I fetched my favorite horse that I left in the mansion's barn, Jörg was already there with his spear. There are two of his followers waiting on his sides.

"Jeez, nii-san, you're so slow. You've got nerve to make me wait."

"I don't remember having any business with you."

"But I have a business with you. You see, I've been thinking about a lot of things. I think that it's important to punish my unfair brother. A penalty of making me embarrassed from winning over foul play, you know? Actually, I just can't stomach the feeling that you're actually still thinking to win against me. I really should teach you where you're really standing."

Jörg shows a vulgar expression. His followers also looks the same. The one who actually stares at those three people is Tina, not me. Feeling in danger, Tina cowers in fear.



“I understand the gist of your thoughts, but let’s hear it once.”

“Why don’t you hand over that girl, nii-san? That girl clears my gloomy mood. I really can’t wait until I become the feudal lord. You should go back home alone.”

“I refuse.”

“Hey, nii-san. Should you really oppose me? Haven’t you understood well from today’s match that I’d inherit the title? Oh, well, if you don’t want to hear what I’m saying, I’ll just steal her by force. It’s just so much fun to say it in front of you.”

While facing this way, Jörg points the tip of his spear towards me.

“Oh my weak brother, try not to anger me too much. You’ll regret it.”

I suck in a deep breath.

“You, Jörg. I’ve been thinking about this for a while now. Aren’t you actually misunderstanding something here?”

From way back, I thought that my younger brother’s strangeness couldn’t be helped. But, honestly, why would he mess around with me to this extent?

“What? Even if you show me a scary angered face, there’s no way I’d get scared.” Jörg takes a step back.

“Do you think you’re actually stronger than me?”

Upon my question, Jörg and his followers burst into chaotic laughter until they’re hugging their stomachs.

“Ahyahyahyaha! Hi, hi. I’m tearing up. Nii-san, you sure can jest. Has there even been a time when you’ve won against me?”

I see, this brat is a real idiot.

“Jörg, get ready for a fight.”

“Heh?”

“I said, hold your spear and get ready for a fight.”

Feeling my killing intent, Jörg holds his spear while still being slow. In that moment, I fill my body with mana to the brim and lunge forward. The ground is dented. My footsteps clearly imprint the ground as I rush forward.

Jörg thrusts his spear in reflex. I grasp that spear with my hand, knocking it off with full strength. With his spear flying, Jörg was swung along with the spear, resisting the centrifugal force, and hit the stone wall of the barn.

“Gah!?”

“It does seem like you’ve misunderstood something, so let me teach you. You are weak. You’re just better than me in the spear. Without the ability to use mana, did you honestly think that you were stronger than me?”

I step closer towards Jörg who seems to be in a great deal of pain after being hit against the wall, slowly daunting him.

“Ee-eeek, nii-san. Wh-why are you so mad. J-joke, it’s just a joke.”

In the matches before Father, mana can’t be used. The reason I can’t win against Jörg is exactly due to the rule of fighting exclusively with spears. If there’s no such rule, there’s no way I’d lack anything against a boy at this level.

“You terrified my precious girl just because you were joking?”

Crouching down in front of his eyes, I grab his hair with my left hand and tilt his head, pinning his right arm. Then, my fist flies out. With a squished sound, I heard something get crushed.

“Ah, agh, aghh, n-nii-san, eeek, eeeeeek!”

My fist grazed Jörg’s left cheek, crashing into the stone wall. Jörg was so terrified that he pissed inside his pants.

“For me, I could accept anything you’ve done to mess around with me until now. Do you understand why? It’s because you’re the most probable candidate to become the feudal lord. I thought that it was bad to have discord between a single village and the future feudal lord, so I endured them.”

“That, that’s right, nii-san. I- I would be the next feudal lord. You shouldn’t op-oppose me, ee, eeek!”

He was so irritating that I punched with my left hand this time, grazing his cheek and crushing the stone wall.

“Do you have any idea how many times I’ve wanted to kill you? I no longer can count them with both hands. If I wasn’t thinking about troublesome things, I should just kill you to automatically become the feudal lord. If I really wanted to, I would’ve done it anytime I liked.”

That way of thinking passed through my mind so many times. It would really have been easier than baking a cake.

“Even so, either from sentiment of being related by blood or my fair spirit, I kept my good faith and resisted it. In a way, you live because I let you, you hear me? If I was short-fused, you would have died a long time ago. Be grateful that you have a kind brother. However, there’s a limit to my patience too. Too bad, it doesn’t matter to you when you’re messing around.”

“Fo, forgive me, nii-san, don’t kill me, it’s my fault, it really is, so.”

With tears running down his face, Jörg pleads for my forgiveness. As I see that, my head cools down a little.

“Jörg, this is the first time I voice out what’s truly on my mind. Why do you think I convey these thoughts to you?”

“B-because I laid my hand on your precious person, n-nii-san.”

“That’s one big reason. But actually, there’s another reason. If I fight normally now in the selection ceremony, I’ll still win. That’s why, I don’t have any reason left to avoid discord with you. I’ve had enough of your rudeness. If you don’t want to die, choose your words carefully. This is my war declaration. I’ll win fair and square against you in the arena.”

I wanted to say those lines.

“Tina, shall we go now?”

“Ye-yes, Kurt-sama.”

I straddle the horse, then Tina who is flustered runs up to me, climbs up the horse, and wraps her arms around my waist.

“I’m sorry, Tina. Looks like I’ve scared you.”

“Ah, no, I’m fine! I was a little scared, but you were really cool today, Kurt-sama.”

She blushes, her voice’s pitch rises. Somehow, it seems that she’s not actually scared. I feel relieved from the bottom of my heart, then speed up the horse.

Chapter 9

Margrave Fernande

It took us a night to return to our settler's village from the main village.

I made a war declaration to Jorg. It's something I couldn't pull back... Or rather, there's a side of me which declared the war exactly for that reason.

I prepared and adjusted my outfit. Usually, I'd wear something plain that's perfectly fine to get stains during the reclamation. But today, Margrave Fernande will come inspecting this village. I have to wear proper clothes.

Margrave Fernande will be looking around the settler's village that I built... as Jörg's village.

My father and Jörg will accompany the margrave. I was only told to tag along to answer all kinds of questions from him. There'll be many questions that can't be answered by anyone other than me who built this village.

"Tina, today I'm relying on you to take care of the house."

"I understand, Kurt-sama."

I've explained the situation to Tina. She can't tag along today, as expected.

"Here, your lunch box."

Tina passes a picnic basket to me. Inside, there are sandwiches that Tina made and the cookies that I baked. The sandwich fillings today aren't just cheese, there's also goat meat in between. This is a rare luxury. This is surely her way of cheering me on.

"Kurt-sama, you can do it!"

"Yes, I'll work hard. Though I do feel a little complicated."

I exited the house while smiling bitterly.



After that dispute with Jörg, I received a summon from my father's envoy. At that time, we went through a briefing regarding Father's and the Margrave's inspection. There were some matters acknowledged in the briefing repeatedly.

First, Jörg takes the credit of managing the village. However, they'll say that I'm his adviser. This way, if I'm the one who inherits the title, I'll be able to proudly say that everything is done by me as a practice.

Father and Jörg had no choice but to acknowledge that, because Jörg knew next to nothing about the village. If he only mentions stuffs from my report document, there'll be flaws.

Second, I won't let Jörg say useless things. Father will take care of the fundamental matters, but I'll be the one to reply to more detailed questions. Since Jörg is most likely bad at saying complicated things, Father has no choice but to agree to it.

Margrave Fernande will have arrived in the main village last night, so Father and Jörg were showing our hospitality. He should arrive soon.

I see the silhouette of a horse carriage. With that splendor and family crest, there's no mistake that it belongs to Margrave Fernande. Somehow, there's a horse running alongside it. The one riding that horse is Margrave Fernande himself in person. Right, I think Father has mentioned something about this. As a hobby and stress reducing activity, sometimes he would handle the horses personally like that.

Both the horses and the carriage halted right in front of me.

"Hello, Kurt-kun, it's really been a while, yes? I've been looking forward to seeing you, more than Jörg-kun actually."

Before Father and the others even managed to climb down the carriage, Margrave Fernande greets me in a volume that only I could hear as he got off from his horse. He's in his late thirties. Even though he's slender, there's an apparent unmistakable bearing of a noble from him.

"I'm extremely grateful, Margrave Fernande. I've also been looking forward to the day where I'll be able to be graced with your presence. First of all, my gratitude. Because of your assistance, I was able to obtain my manuscript job. That I'm able to gain more

knowledge as well as a funding source, you have my utmost gratitude.”

My manuscript job that I’ve been doing was introduced by Margrave Fernande. No matter how much I thank him, it won’t be enough.

“Well, that is all swell. I am your fan. Actually, I bought about half of your manuscript works. Your translation sense is great, and you are highly accurate in deciphering the codes of magic art books. Against my better judgment, I ended up buying even the original books, where I can stumble upon new findings. I expect a lot from you next time as well.”

I’m grateful. Commissions from translating and deciphering brings incomparably great profits.

“I will continue diligently.”

“Your modesty is also great. Also, I bring someone who really wants to see you more than I do. A more avid reader than I am, also an avid learner. While learning by comparing your translation to the original works, it can’t be helped that you have piqued this person’s interest. Thus I brought this person along.”

“I’m looking forward to meeting them. In this kind of village, I have too few opportunities to talk with a knowledgeable person.”

In a remote village, no matter what, there’s nobody I could discuss science and literature with. I’d like to have that once in a while.

“Then I’m glad. That person will show up soon.”

The carriage is opened. Firstly, my father and brother climb down the carriage, then Father aids a lady to climb down as well. The one who exits the carriage is a beautiful young lady. Most likely, she’s slightly younger than me, isn’t she? She’s a girl with pale pink hair and nice style. For some reason, she gives off the impression of a gentle person.

Jörg looks at the girl, bearing this goofy perverted face. I understand. I couldn’t do anything but agree that she’s *that* beautiful. My eyes meet Jörg’s. Since he looks frightened, I look away.

“Dearest Father, might this personage be Kurt Arnold-sama?”

Like a flower blooming, the girl rushes over with a smile.

“He is Kurt Arnold-kun. Faruno, please be a little more ladylike.”

“I apologize, Father. However, when I think about that Kurt-sama, I couldn’t curb down my enthusiasm. There are things in his translations that I wanted to ask for explanation.”

“Kurt-kun, please excuse this kind of daughter of mine.”

“Not at all, you should not mind about it.”

“Faruno, why don’t you give your greetings.”

“Yes, Father.”

The girl who’s called Faruno stands up before me, then curtsies by lifting the hem of her skirt, lightly bowing her head down. A graceful conduct of behavior, befitting her nobility.

アルフレート・フェルナンデ

「私は、ファルノ・フェルナンデ。
フェルナンデ家の三女です。
以後、お見知りおきを」



“I am Faruno Fernande, the third daughter of the Fernande family. Please do take care of me hereafter.”

“I am Kurt Arnold, the eldest son of the Baronetcy of Arnold. Please take care of me as well.”

We bow our heads to each other. Faruno gently offers her hand, which I hold in return. What a soft and warm hand.

“Yesterday, we’ve been welcomed with a great hospitality. However, I was greatly disappointed because there was no Kurt-sama. Please do exchange some words with me today for yesterday’s worth as well.”

“I also wish for a long discussion, but my obligation today is to take Margrave Fernande around.”

“Is that so... even though I’ve finally earned the opportunity to meet you...”

Saying so, Faruno shows a regretful expression. I open my mouth after showing a wry smile.

“How about this. In the break of the inspection, if Margrave Fernande allows it, we might have our discussion.”

“I have no qualms about it. Rather, please do so on my behalf as well. Would you give my daughter your company?”

Faruno’s eyes light up the moment Margrave Fernande says so.

“Then let’s get to it right away. About the explanation over here, Kurt-sama...”

It’s a thick book. Faruno just takes out the manuscript that I wrote from her bag. There are labels everywhere, and opening the pages reveal that they are filled with notes.

“Faruno, I permit you to have your discussion during the inspection’s break, but I won’t allow more than that.”

“I apologize, Father.”

Grinning, Faruno sticks out her tongue. What a splendid girl. In that instant, I can feel

a stare. Jörg has been looking at me with a crooked, envious expression. Really, why is it so difficult to handle this brat?



“First, I’ll show you the reclaimed land that has turned into farming fields. Last year, we have safely managed to sprinkle the wheat seeds. With the effort of my son Jörg, it has reached this point in merely three years.”

Father begins to explain to the Margrave. He first showed the place where the reclamation is finished. Because it’s the autumn sowing type of wheat, it will get harvested soon. One side has been entirely covered with abundant wheat.

“*Hou*, what a splendid wheat field. It looks even healthier than the wheat in my territory. Is there some kind of secret?”

The Margrave appears to be keenly interested. Father stares at me, signaling to answer that question.

“Please allow me to answer that. If I have to choose a reason, it would be due to a peculiar fertilizer and the benefit of soybeans.”

“What is this peculiar fertilizer?”

“In the corner of this field, there are piles of black soil.”

“Dark soil... and how are they produced?”

“They’re made from scattering the dung of the livestock. I believe that Milord also uses them.”

“That sounds about right. I do so.”

In this era, the concept of making manure doesn’t exist yet. Spreading the dung of livestock is already the extent of it.

“However, there are various problems about that. Directly using the manure sometimes result in sick plants, so this method doesn’t always have a good effect. Not only is there not enough nutrition in the soil, it becomes the breeding ground of bugs and sickness.”

“Then would you say that you have found a method to solve this?”

“That is correct. I dig a deep hole to throw away the manures. I call it *koudame*. We’ll create naturally high temperature condition like this, killing the bacteria and bugs, as well as releasing the hot gas that could kill the plants. We can add the nutrients that the dung lacks afterwards, mixing maples (*momiji*) that are abundant in autumn, wheat’s threshed husks, and crushed shells, then let it go through a fermentation process. After around a month, it will become that kind of black soil. It is a fertilizer that will provide the nutrients necessary for the crops without actually harming them.”

The Margrave makes the “*hou*” admiring sound.

“That is superb. Do you mind if I implement it in my territory?”

“Not at all. I will write down the detailed instructions. Additionally, please bring back a jute bag filled with about 10 kilograms of the black soil. There’s an issue of soil compatibility. You may continue using it after testing with half of your field and receiving a good result from the black soil. I also did the same.”

I suddenly bombard out everything new about the field, please pardon this rudeness. Agricultural failure is closely tied to the people’s starvation. We need to be cautious.

“I accept your kind advice. However, is it truly alright, not to make this the trade secret of the Arnold family?”

“For that matter, I think it’s more wonderful if the whole country can become rich.”

That is important for my dream. How could people who’re still troubled over their meal of the day eat some sweets? If the food production increases, there will be some margin for people to afford sweets. I want to turn this world into that kind of world. That’s why, I write down this fertilizer in the report to my father and share it with everyone in this fief. However, it has been put down as a child’s joke and hasn’t been implemented widely yet...

“You have nothing but benevolence. Now, you also mentioned the soybean, didn’t you?”

“Yes, by growing soybeans, the field soil’s condition will be restored. By growing wheat and soybean in turns, not only the soil is enriched, the soybean also becomes a staple

food for the people.”

“I see. Let’s do that as well. Now let’s talk about the waterway that I’ve never seen before right there.”

“About that...”

I made a thorough explanation about the device I set up in this field. Before I was reincarnated, I took care of beekeeping and orchards in my parent’s home back in Yamanashi, as well as doing a part time job in the neighbor’s farm, hence my knowledge about these things, the techniques passed down and advanced through thousands of years of agriculture in Japan. I make the best use of the parts I could use in the fief.

“Amazing, how amazing. I never thought that this kind of device existed. Honestly, Sir Arnold. Your son is amazing.”

“Ah no, he never shows it. However, he really has been doing his part well as Jörg’s assistant.”

“Now that you mentioned it, the head of this territory is Jörg-kun, while Kurt-kun is helping to assist, isn’t it?”

“Yes. That is so.”

“Then I shall ask Jörg-kun, what is that farming tool? I’ve never seen that shape before.”

The tool that he points at is *senbakoki*, the grain thresher. Our threshing performance entirely depends on whether we have that tool or not.

“Eh, uh, that. That’s just something my brother created on his own, so, I. Uh, don’t know.”

“Is that so? Well then, why don’t you let me know the name of ten villagers working in this fief?”

“Well, that’s. Actually. I just guide them, so to the extent of knowing every single name, is kind of...”

“...It seems that I’ve asked a dull question. Sir Arnold, Kurt-kun, this has been an extremely valuable experience. Thank you. Kurt-kun, I’m sorry to impose on you, but let me know once you’re done with the instructional transcription. However, it is unsightly that I’m the only one profiting from this. Let me reward you as well.”

Margrave Fernande turns at me and smiles.

“Sir Arnold. All that we’ve seen today is devised by him. He’s also the one doing the documentation. I believe you do not mind that I reward him personally?”

“Absolutely.”

“Well then, Kurt-kun. What do you wish for?”

“Well, if possible, domesticated chickens that will lay eggs, along with a few roosters.”

My mouth moves in an instant. After telling that, my face blushes. Since it’s a reward, I blurted out the wish from the bottom of my heart without thinking twice. When making sweets, eggs are essential. However, chickens are so expensive that I can’t buy them. I’ve been thinking to buy a few I can afford the next time I go out to the town, though.

“Hahahahahaha, honestly, you’re far from being greedy. Isn’t that fine? I’ll present chickens to this village.”

The Margrave laughs until he’s holding his stomach.

“Let’s end today’s inspection here. Sir Arnold, I’ll have to impose on you in your mansion in the main village for tonight. Tomorrow, I shall return to my fief. Before that, would you allow me to go hunting in your territory? Hunting is my hobby. My blood boils when I see a lush forest like this.”

“I have no qualms. However, there are beasts in this forest and it’s easy to get lost here. It’s important to bring someone well-acquainted.”

“You’re not wrong. Then, Kurt-kun. May I rely on you to guide me around for hunting?”

When the Margrave said that, Jörg opened his mouth, “Oh, no, please let this servant become your guide.”

“No, you’re fine to stay.”

“Why is that? I am the next Baronet. I should be more suitable.”

Jörg’s voice held impatience. He believed that he was overwhelmingly close to being the next feudal lord.

“I said you were fine to stay. I could not entrust my life to you. I could tell with a glance that you don’t know the next thing about the forest. That skin that never sees sunlight, that lanky figure. I’m not that reckless to have such an amateur as my guide.”

Jörg’s voice disappears; he couldn’t make any rebuttal. Jörg has taken a leisure stroll in the main village before, but he never enters the forest. He flaps his mouth open and closed, but eventually, he just keeps being silent.

Sparing him a glance, I open my mouth.

“Then if Milord is fine with me, please do allow me to be your guide.”

“I’ll entrust it to you. You seem like you know some good spots.”



Me, the Margrave, Faruno, and two guards for the margrave enter the forest. The margrave has prepared a stack of bows in advance inside the horse carriage.

“What can we find in the forest around this time?”

“It’s the season for ducks and pheasants, I suppose.”

“I see. I’m looking forward to today, then.” The margrave laughs joyfully.

“Oh, also, Kurt-kun, there’s something I actually want to confirm... The village introduced to us today was said to be Jörg’s work, but isn’t it actually your doing?” the margrave said with a smile on his face.

Chapter 10

The Kind Man's Unnecessary Concern

Suddenly, Margrave Fernande saw through Father's lies.

"What could you possibly be saying?"

"My eyes aren't blind, you know?" His tone is confident.

"That village, is Jörg's village, I'm merely helping as his assistant."

"I'm tired of hearing that lie. It's obvious for anyone who has eyes. The eyes of the villagers there follow your figure; none of them are looking at Jörg. Also, your replies to my questions are on point, with the passionate character from the sweat shed by oneself. I will say this one more time, my eyes aren't blind. Just by looking, it's apparent whose village it is."

I lift both my hands in surrender. "I lost. Indeed, I built that village. It finally took shape after three years of blood and sweat."

If Father found out about this, I would get a severe scolding. However, it couldn't be helped. It's Jörg's fault for not being able to give decent replies.

"I'm glad I clarified this matter. Could it be that Sir Arnold usually snatches your merits to secure Jörg's candidacy by design?"

My heart thumps unpleasantly. That emotion is anger. Anger from snatching my dream.

"As amazing as ever, Margrave Fernande. Nothing escapes you to that extent."

The margrave chuckles as I speak.

"I see. As I expected of you as well; can't you read his true feelings?"

"His true feelings?"

Is this about what my father could possibly feel as he trampled upon my feelings?

“I feel bad for Sir Arnold, but let me tell you a secret. Sir Arnold isn’t a man of that small a caliber. His thoughts lie elsewhere. Therefore, I did not rebuke his false reports before.”

“How’s that possible...?”

When I heard my ownership of my village got absurdly confiscated and passed on to Jörg, I didn’t think beyond that, or even imagined what could possibly be the reason.

“Do you like this village? Even if you can’t become the feudal lord, do you think you could continue living on as the head of this village?”

“It is as you said.”

I wanted to make my dream come true while spending time in this village. That’s because of the attachment I felt towards this village that I built with Tina, the bond that I have with the people living here, conquering the world by western confectionery with Japanese taste made by utilizing the knowledge of honey and fruits from my Yamanashi family’s orchard, the ultimate sweets from the best ingredients I could make with my own hands. That strong aspiration is the reason why I like growing various things while imagining the perfected form of the sweets.

“That’s precisely why. Because you’re clinging to this village, your father took this away from you using the most plausible excuse.”

“Why would he make that kind of cruel move!?”

If it’s for the sake of profit, I could understand. But to think that he would take away the village only to aggravate me. How could I possibly forgive that?

“I actually received a request from Sir Arnold. It’s a plead to employ you after the selection ceremony is over.”

“Wha-!?”

This is the first time I heard something like that.

“Sir Arnold said something like he really wanted to let you succeed the Arnold family,

but you don't have the essential point: talent in the spear. However, it's too regretful to let you settle down as a small village head in the fief of the Arnold baronetcy. He spoke so heatedly about how your talent would help me attain greatness."

"That kind of reason to take away the village I'm attached to is just..."

Father has always been thinking with good intentions. According to his thoughts, by taking away the village, once the margrave extends the invitation, there's no way I'd refuse that. On the other hand, as long as I continue to stay in this village, I would definitely disagree with that offer.

"I certainly regard you really highly. I noticed your vast knowledge and intelligence from your manuscript works. I also understood your practical ability by looking at this village. And then, I could grasp how popular you are from the way the villagers look at you. I truly wish to employ you. Just leave it to me to find you an important position."

Everything is connected now. I dare to say that my father's moves are all done for my sake, thinking how Margrave Fernande would see through the lies spoken in today's inspection. The inspection itself actually serves as my job interview for the margrave. Otherwise, he wouldn't let me be alone with Margrave Fernande, because there's a great danger of exposing all of his lies.

To let the margrave see my abilities, he raises Jörg's arrogance. Most likely, if I go to the margrave's place, my future would be a rose-colored life... But even so.

"Margrave Fernande. Please allow me to refuse this talk."

"*Hou*, may I hear the reason?"

"I have no intention to give up on the feudal lord's seat."

"Hm, you said that so resolutely. However, even if you become the feudal lord, I believe that your future will be brighter if you come to my place rather than staying in this remote area."

"I understand that perfectly. Even so, I have a dream. That dream can't be fulfilled unless I am here."

"One that has more value than my offer?"

“Yes. It’s my lifelong dream. If you don’t mind, I will escort you to see my dream.”

Then, I take the margrave and Faruno along to see the raspberry flower field that Tina and I created.



“This is such a well done flower garden.”

“Was this garden created by Kurt-sama?”

White raspberry flowers are blooming everywhere in the field. The loveliness of such a natural bloom shows the glittering lives that moves the heart of the two people who are used to seeing various gorgeous flowers.

“Yes, I made this garden together with a girl named Tina. There are wooden boxes in the corner with bees coming in and out. They are man-made bee hives, a device to extract honey without crushing the nest.”

“*Hou*, in other words, no matter how many times the bees accumulate honey, this allows you to harvest that honey?”

“Yes, right now 10 boxes are my limit to care after, but since we have a great harvest this year, I can add more people next year, working with around 50 boxes. From each beehive, I can take up to 40 liters of honey per year, making it a lucrative industry.”

In this era, honey is extremely valuable. There are many villages whose livelihood are beekeeping, yet because they have to crush the nest to squeeze out the honey every time, their performances are poor. Moreover, that method takes up a great amount of time. In conclusion, the price is really high. But on my side, we can produce them cheaply and in great quantity.

“So this is your dream, to operate an upstart large-scale honey production?”

“That is incorrect. Keeping the bees is merely one way to achieve it.”

Then I open the basket that Tina handed over to me, taking the cookies made from honey, and hand over those cookies to Faruno and the margrave. I’m really grateful that Tina packed up the cookies as well. That girl really is my goddess of fortune.

“My dream is to be the world’s best pastry chef. Since I couldn’t go anywhere without the ingredients, I made the honey. Because selling processed products will bring more profit than selling them raw, I want to sell the cookies I just gave to you as this village’s special product. I’ll buy fruit tree seedlings with that money and build orchards. Furthermore, I’ll add the types and quantities of the sweets, then use them as my capital funds to start trading to procure rare ingredients, and eventually I’ll use those with my own village’s raw products to create the ultimate pastry... That is my dream.”

A far and distant dream. But I don’t believe it’s impossible. I’m properly looking at the path to tread.

“How to call it, a tale of dream. For the sake of that kind of thing, you cast away a future that will certainly bring you a rose-colored life. The tale of your dream, is a sweet dream larger than the sweets themselves.”

“Please decide if I can fulfill that dream or not after you take a bite of that cookie. It’s a cookie made from plenty of honey harvested from here. That cookie is my resolution, the first step towards that dream.”

“This tiny piece of cookie... A mere plain looking thin piece contains your everything. Interesting, let’s try it.”

Margrave Fernande and Faruno both take a bite. I hear the small pleasant sound of chewing from them. Both of them are used to eating luxurious gaudy-looking sweets. If I could make them understand, I would finally see the feasibility of my dream.

“This is... To have a taste like this, in this small village. Compared to this, all of the sweets that I’ve tasted are no different than lumps of sugar.”

“This pleasant sweetness, dreamy chewiness, with no cloying, it disappears all of a sudden. Aaah! Why is there only one piece!?”

Exactly because of its simplicity that it could show the amazing trait of honey as the raw material, as well as the superb aftertaste due to the meticulous attention without any compromise when baking that one piece of cookie.

“Huff... I lost. I could already see the path of your dream with this cookie. Even if you don’t come to my place, you could do it. But if you’re like this, this village will still be taken away from you, you know?”

“It is all right. I will win. I’ll show you that I’ll become the feudal lord.”

“*Hou*, so confident. Did anything happen?”

“I wouldn’t have asked for chickens as my reward earlier, otherwise. There’ll be no meaning if I get expelled from this village.”

“That is true.”

Listening to my response, Margrave Fernande shows a wry smile. I believe that I’ll win the selection ceremony. Truthfully, in today’s inspection, I finally thought of a way to gain more abilities in a short amount of time; a secret plan to finish learning an ability with my S-rank aptitude that should’ve taken two months in one week, no, in one day.

“But what a pity. I can’t help but to think of how I’ve missed to gain a skillful subordinate... Besides, if I had known that you could make sweets so wonderful, how could I possibly let you go?”

As I heard those words, Margrave Fernande, Faruno, and I all laughed out loud together.

“If you like it so much, I’ll pack more cookies along with the earlier document. I’m grateful that you let me know about my father’s thoughts. Well, even so, my father’s worry is an unnecessary concern to me. I will cut open my path in life by myself.”

Thanks to Margrave Fernande, I can feel at ease without feeling any resentment towards my father. I’m really thankful for that.

“Wow, we can bring Kurt-sama’s sweets as a souvenir!? How wonderful.”

“Yes, I will make them for you earnestly.”

“I’m happy too. Obviously a piece is far from enough. If it’s this wonderful cookie... That’s right, we have to send a gift to the Duchess soon. She’s a gourmet, so it’ll probably be great if we can send her your cookies. Precisely because she’s really used to extravagance, this simplicity will resound in her heart. Let’s send them garnished with her favorite roses.”

I hesitate a bit. These cookies are indeed delicious. But to send them to a ducal house...

“I will do so. However, If I’m going to send something to the Duchess, won’t it be good to send better cookies? Using the honey and wheat from this village, then unsalted butter made from cow’s milk, and almonds. And because of how she favors the roses, I need the rose petals, and also rum. If I have these, I’ll show you the very best cookies I can make.”

“If you have something that could surpass these, then after the selection ceremony, bring yourself to my manor. I’ll collect the ingredients in that place, so would you cook there?”

“Yes, I’ll gladly do so.”

Buying the Margrave’s favor will definitely become a plus point if I think about what would happen afterwards. For that sake, I have to become the feudal lord first. My mind stiffens from that thought.

“Right, about the chickens. I’ll bring them here when I return to witness the ceremony. Until then, prepare something that can be used as chicken shed.”

“That fast? That’s great news.”

“That’s just another reason. I wish to eat more of your sweets, it doesn’t seem like I can hold back until you bring yourself to my manor. When I come back here, I’ll bring chickens and chicken eggs, so would you make more sweets for me using the eggs at that time?”

I think about the recipe. Sweets that will display the deliciousness (*umami*) of the egg... It has to be that, isn’t it?

“Then I have a request. Would you be able to prepare up to 50 eggs?”

“It’s possible, but what are you going to do with those?”

“To celebrate the new feudal lord, the Baronetcy of Arnold will hold a festival. I’m thinking to treat all 200 attendants with some sweets. For that, I’m going to need 50 eggs.”

“...You. Really, you’re interesting. Then, I have to arrive as soon as possible.”

“There’s no need to hurry. There’s two hours from the end of the ceremony to the start

of the festival. If I have that, I can handle 200 people's portion."

I smile, and this time, it's Margrave Fernande's turn to laugh out loud.

Chapter 11

Kurt's Magic and Special Training's Preparation

I see off the departure of Margrave Fernande and his daughter, Faruno, before going on my way back. They are returning on the carriage pulled by their valet to the main village where my father and brother are. Margrave Fernande invited me to go back to the main village with them and have a dinner together, but I politely refused. This is my choice. I won't see my father or brother until the selection ceremony.

Besides, I don't have much time. It's essential to gain an ability within the short remaining time. I go back to my house, determined to deliberately reflect on a method to train starting tomorrow and how to make the preparations.



In the morning, I head over to the reclamation site with Tina, because I have something I must tell the villagers. As Tina and I arrive at the site, the workers greet me one after another. I return their greetings then ask them to gather before me.

"Everyone, I apologize. I have something important to tell you."

My words cause quite a stir around me.

"I think there are those among you who already know. Five days from now, I will have a duel with my younger brother Jörg in the selection ceremony. Whoever wins will become the next feudal lord, but if I lose, they promised me that I could still stay in this village."

The villagers look relieved. It must be the relief from knowing that I won't leave this village even if I lose, isn't it?

"However... That promise is overruled. If I were to lose, I have to return to the main village and leave this village's management in Jörg's hand."

Every villager's face turns sour in one breath.

“No way, that good-for-nothing?”

“I haven’t heard anything good about him. Even his blood relatives are lamenting his idiocy, you know?”

“I heard once that he squeezed out his brother’s talent.”

I can hear the noises everywhere. The people in this village originally come from other villages; they obviously have heard the rumors about Jörg. He has a bad reputation from doing anything he wants using his parents’ influence.

“I don’t want to hand over this village to him. I want to avoid any misfortune befalling everyone of you, because I really love this village. For that sake, until the selection ceremony, I wish for the time to devote myself to preparing. I wish to do special training for the duel in the remaining time.”

I bow.

“If I’m not here, you naturally will need to deal with any problems as well as wounded people, but I truly won’t be able to work on the reclamation for a short while. I apologize for burdening you guys, but no matter what, I want to win.”

My surroundings become silent. Then, someone opens his mouth, “Please raise your head, Young Master. How could we not be okay with that?”

“Hear, hear. We’ve been spoiled too much by Young Master.”

“A week is nothing. We can do something about it by ourselves.”

“Actually, if Kurt-sama doesn’t win because you don’t do it, let alone a week, we won’t be able to meet your eyes for our lifetime.”

“That’s absolutely true.”

The villagers all laugh at the same time.

“Kurt-sama, please don’t mind about the matters here. We’ve been doing this with Kurt-sama, we’ve learned many things from you. We’ll get by with ourselves. That’s why, do the special training or anything you need with all your power. In exchange, please win it for us too.”

Heat wells up inside my chest. “Forgive me. Thank you,” I answer shortly with a constricted voice.

“I’m going to say it, but Kurt-sama, you won’t leave this village even after you become the feudal lord, right?”

“That’s a given, because I’m going to make this an even better village.”

Then, I stand up and leave the spot. If I sit idle any longer here, I’m going to show them an embarrassing sight. For my sake as well as theirs, I must win.



Returning home, I’m standing in the kitchen.

“Kurt-sama, what special training are you going to do?”

“Cooking.”

“Huh?” Tina stares at me, looking dumbfounded. Well, I understand why she would.

“If I practice cooking, I’ll become stronger. It’s a method that can only be done by me. There is a special training that cannot be done without overwhelming talent and advanced food preparation technique, you know?”

“Talent and food preparation technique, you say?”

“I obtained Magic, and it gave me the knowledge about the mechanism of the world. Thanks to that, I realized what would be the ultimate method for special training.”

My all seeing eyes taught me about the mechanism of proficiency. There’s a hole in that mechanism that will improve the proficiency in a thoroughly efficient way. That is cooking.

When Tina heard the word Magic, her ears stood up and her eyes sparkled. “Amazing! Magic? What kind of Magic is it?”

Her surprise is understandable. A person who can use mana will only appear in every 1,000 people to begin with. And people who can obtain their essential, inherent power called Magic only appears one in every one hundred of those cases. In other words,

one in a 100,000 common people. Obtaining Magic means being lucky... but there's also a scary part to it.

"I'll say this beforehand: Don't ever spill it to others. You're the only one I can tell."

"Only me... Only for me..."

Tina grabs her hand while being dazed. Working so often with water, those hands are ruined and chapped. It's the hands of a hard worker.

"Tina, do your hands hurt?"

"It does hurt a little, but I can tune it out completely, so please don't worry about it."

"Let's heal it. I'm able to do that, because my power is ^{Heal} Recovery."

Boosting my mana, I cast ^{Heal} Recovery. In an instant, Tina's whole body appears in my mind.

"Amazing! My hands are pretty! I'm so happy! It was actually really tough," Tina speaks in an overjoyed voice, looking at her smooth hands. As a girl, she seems happier to have them pretty again even when her wounds are all gone.

"Tina, do you feel any change besides that?"

"Change? Now that you said it, somehow, I can feel something warm overflowing inside me. What is this? It's the first time I feel this kind of sensation."

Looking bewildered, she hugs her body. I understood everything. Tina's mana has awakened.

When I used ^{Heal} Recovery, I knew about her. Only one in a thousand people could use mana was a misconception. The truth is, anyone can handle mana. However, people who are born with the organ healthy enough to bring forth mana are only one in a thousand.

In other words, if I cast ^{Heal} Recovery, anyone can have their mana-generating organ become healed, enabling that person to use mana thereafter.

I gulp.

People who can use mana are precious. Alone, they can work more than a few soldiers' worth. The ability to create as many soldiers as I wish? This is too dangerous.

And it's not only that. My ^{Heal}Recovery can heal practically any wounds or sickness as long as my target is alive. I can even "heal" aging. I can make an army full of soldiers who will never age. That's my ^{Heal}Recovery. If anyone finds out about it, it'll be more than just troublesome.

"Oh no, something, is overflowing." Tina's newly awakened mana is toying with her. Softly, I put my hand against her back and suppress her mana. Next, I'll have to teach her how to use it.

"Tina, listen to me carefully. That power is mana. The mana inside you has awakened."

"My mana..."

"Yes, now concentrate on my hand on your back."

"It's strange, I can feel Kurt-sama's warmth flowing into my body."

"Yes, it's a good feeling. Now, focus on my warmth inside you."

"Yes, I can feel Kurt-sama inside me."

"Then, try to follow along with my power by yourself, using that strange something inside you."

"Chasing after Kurt-sama's heat. This, it feels good."

Inside Tina, her mana circulation has begun. Tina has used the mana controlling principle. I remove my hand. It should be all right now.

"Congratulations, Tina. You can properly control your mana now."

"This kind of... Being able to use mana by myself this easily... Is this because of Kurt-sama's Magic?" After Tina looks at her hands strangely, she asked.

“That’s right, though it’s just by chance. Originally, everyone is born with mana. But many people have their organ damaged, the one that will bring it forth. When I used ^{Heal} Recovery on you, I healed it along with your hands.”

“Is that so... But I’m happy! With this, I can be even more useful to Kurt-sama! I can bring heavier stuffs and protect Kurt-sama!”

I grasp her fists tightly, causing her ears to stand up rigidly. “I’m happy with your feelings. But still, if someone finds out that anyone can use mana, I’ll be in great danger, even get killed as the worst consequence. So, this is just our secret.”

“Yes! I’ll definitely keep it as a secret.”

Tina bows with a stern face. I’m glad Tina was the first one I used this ^{Heal} Recovery on. This could cause countless troubles to the target.

We probably could keep this our secret. To some extent, there are many people who have their mana awakened for the first time after some years. And I’m not worried that she will tell others about me being the one who awakened her mana.

“Now, then, that’s a little detour, but I should start now. The special training.”

Putting a cabbage on the cutting board and cutting it with a knife, I feel fired up.

Chapter 12

The Cabbage, The Sword, and Special Training

“Tina, right now I’m going to show you my serious effort.”

My voice reverberates in the kitchen. There’s a knife in my hand and a cabbage on the cutting board.

Obtaining an ability requires an improvement in proficiency. Then, what is proficiency? It is the amount of experience of conducting an action related to an ability.

My aptitude belongs to the Sword and Magic Arte. These two are S-ranked and, following closely, are archery, cooking, and blacksmithing with A-ranks. Out of those, there’s nothing important; there are some Bs but the rest are below C. If compared to an ordinary person who’ll have their aptitudes below D with a couple of Cs, I must have been really blessed.

I was surprised to have a Cooking Ability as well, with Cooking Ability II on top of that.

A Cooking Ability doesn’t mean any food I make will taste delicious unconditionally. It’s just the ability to correct the nimbleness of my fingers and to see through the condition and flavor of the ingredients. It’s only an assistance to prepare the food at most, but I’m happy with it. I won’t be happy if it’s a Skill that’ll change the taste of my food unnaturally.

“Right now, I’m going to master the sword, because I can’t win against Jörg with spear.”

“Sword?”

I’m tempering myself thoroughly by using a highly versatile Sword Ability. Being able to use sword skills is useful in many things.

“Um, excuse me, Kurt-sama, you’re going to temper yourself in the sword right now, right?”

“Naturally.”

As I say that, Tina stares at the knife I'm holding and tilts her neck.

A sword proficiency requires using a sword. Then, with my all-seeing eyes as the side effect of my ^{Heal} Recovery Magic, I saw the slim chance.

Supposedly, when someone equips something he thinks of as a sword, the margin of his proficiency improvement towards the cutting target will change. That proficiency improvement is caused by the occurrence of an action with stronger emotion than the standard. That emotional strength will become the positive correction.

For example, even if I practice swinging while holding a wooden sword (*bokutou*), if I think of it as a wooden stick rather than a blade, I won't improve as a whole. Cutting some materials will also overwhelmingly increase my proficiency improvement margin, more than swinging practice. On top of it, if I cut something organic, my improvement margin will increase almost twice compared to cutting inorganic matter, without actually decreasing the emotional value. It even results in raising the emotional value.

"Tina, for the sake of getting stronger in the sword, the promptest method is to cross real swords."

Crossing swords in a fight with real weapons is the most suitable method to improve the proficiency. If I use a real sword, I will have that compulsory awareness towards the sword. I undoubtedly have to practice with an organic matter to move beyond slashing. Moreover, the knowledge that I'm taking a life will largely move my emotions.

"But, Kurt-sama, you're currently in the kitchen, holding a kitchen knife, you know? Can you do a real sword fight with that?"

"It's the case of doing frontal attack in a true crossing of swords. In my case, a real sword fight is impossible, hence this other method."

"The other method? By not using swords?"

"I'm using the sword properly, though? To a cook, the knife is a sword and the pot is a shield."

I regard the knife in my hand as a sword. The all-seeing eyes made me realize that I firmly recognize the knife as sword. I also have a reason why I chose cabbage.

“Look at my sword dance. Haaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!” Small, pleasant sounds of chopping against the cutting board keep resounding.

In my previous world, I was working as a pâtissier in a high class restaurant, being responsible for the desserts that worked as the finishing touch of the course.

The restaurant I worked at regarded the desserts as the most important thing. A pâtissier was responsible for the dessert that came out at the end of the course, the number one thing that would leave an impression on the customers. Becoming that kind of pâtissier meant I had to be the most skillful one in the restaurant. Also, if I didn’t understand the restaurant’s dishes, I wouldn’t be able to make the ultimate marriage of the dish and the dessert. Therefore, the pâtissier had to be able to cook all the restaurant’s dishes to perfection. That’s the reason why I mastered cooking dishes other than sweets as well.

Being reincarnated doesn’t change my skills. I carved the movements etched into my soul into this body, again and again.

“Amazing, Kurt-sama, you’re so fast. I can’t even see the knife.” Tina’s eyes become round.

I wield the knife to slash three times a second, finely chopping the cabbage. On top of that, with my Cooking Ability, my movement becomes really precise to the point that I can accelerate to slashing five times a second if I try.



“This is my power.”

Let’s review the proficiency system. I will become more proficient from cutting something than practice swinging. Additionally, using an organic target will make the efficacy skyrocket.

I repeat the five-slash-per-second speed from this overwhelmingly efficient organic cutting. In other words, I slash 100 times in 20 seconds, 18,000 times in an hour. I can continue doing this for two hours, or 36,000 times.

I can usually do sword swinging practice only 100 times a day more or less. The tenfold efficiency from cutting an organic matter that results in 36,000 swings means that in just a day, I’ve rivaled a year of disciplined training of an ordinary person.

That’s not even counting my S-rank sword aptitude. Moreover, with the one-rank boost from [The Fool’s Desire], I’ve surpassed the S-rank. I obviously will gain some Abilities.

Furthermore, I have ^{Heal} Recovery Magic. When I feel tired, I can use ^{Heal} Recovery. I can repeat this one year’s worth of intense training set again and again.

“Uhm, Kurt-sama, this is amazing. Really amazing, but can you get stronger from this?”

“Absolutely. Even now, I can feel I’m rapidly growing my sword skills, but...”

“But?”

“The emotional value isn’t enough. There’s no passion.”

“Well, you *did* cut through cabbages and just cabbages...”

A problem occurred. With the lack of emotional value, I’m swinging back and forth in the line between improving my proficiency and not. I can’t prevent this efficiency decrement. I have to do something about it.

Thinking about it calmly, if this method can get you stronger, all of the cooks and housewives will become proficient in the sword. If they don’t, maybe they don’t think of the knife as sword, or the housewives’ proficiency from low emotional value won’t push them past the line.

It's important to push out the boiling passionate emotion when finely chopping the cabbage. I thought of a way.

"DIE, YOU CABBAGEEEEEEEEEEE!!"

I load my killing intent into the cabbage finely chopping action. I don't finely chop the cabbage, I kill it. I finely chop them with that awareness.

"Ku- Kurt-sama?"

Tina looks at me with a baffled, frightened look. It's the first time I see this face on her.

"As I thought, this is no good, huh?"

The emotional value more or less increases, but I can't sustain the killing intent. I'm a cook to begin with. I have a resistance towards pointing my killing intent towards the ingredients.

Think, I have to think.

That's right, if I have a strong emotion, I can apply it to anything. What I turn towards the food shouldn't be killing intent, but love, right?

I'm making food for the sake of the people who will eat them. I turn my face towards Tina's smile. The emotional value increases. I'm cooking the most delicious meal for her sake. There's no way my spirit won't rise from that.

...However, the emotional value is still not enough. I've reached the line of passing the proficiency, but it's still far from having that positive correction. The idea of raising my killing intent like before is no good, but the way I turn up my voice is good. Let's raise the voice full of love.

"Be delicious (*oishiku nare*)! Be delicious!" Yup, by raising my voice, the emotional value also increases.

For Tina's sake. Pour in even more love, more affection. The heightened emotion helps in proficiency climbing.

"Ah, uhm, Kurt-sama. Can you hear me? Kurt-sama? The Kurt-sama today is really weird..."

“Be delicious! Be delicious!” Let’s wield the knife while wholeheartedly letting my voice out! Tina said something beside me, but I’m so full of concentration that I can’t hear her.

But I still lack one step. A step to reach the highest efficacy. Work it up! My love for Tina isn’t just at this level!

Ah, is that it? I can’t only show a smile. An obscure emotion is no good. I must clarify my feelings properly. With that I could form the shape of my feeling for the first time.

Tina, what do I think about you?

“Be delicious! Be delicious!”

Her sweet face and figure, somewhat well-proportioned, her gentle and kind face, her fluffy tail, her beautiful pointy rigid fox ears; I really like her outward appearance.

She pretends to be tough, acting like an adult, but sometimes acts really spoiled. Herself on the inside is also precious to me.

She loves me, supports me more than anyone else. Tina never ceases to show me her best smile, I’m saved by this gesture of hers.

That’s right. Because she’s that kind of girl, I love Tina with all my heart!

“Be delicious! Be delicious!”

Swelling up to the limit with all about her in my mind, my emotional value finally arrives at its upper limit. The optimal efficacy. Death match with real swords; with the passionate emotion that surpasses this stage, I finely cut the cabbage.

“Be delicious! Be delicious!”

After two hours, finally I reach the point of being unable to move my arms. This is my limit. Sweat pours out all over me. It’s the best two hours with the highest density. I quickly perform the Recovery Magic on myself. Let’s do another set.

“Now then, let’s go with this kind of-... Tina?”

I promptly fix my eyes on Tina beside me. She looks at me, somehow covering her mouth with both hands, with tears overflowing from her eyes.

“Kurt-sama, your mind has finally broken... Forgive me. I never realized it before it came to this... Someday, I will return you to normal, I’ll always be with you and protect you. That’s why, you don’t have anything to worry about, Kurt-sama.”

What on earth is she saying? She said that as if I’ve become crippled.

Even though I just want to firmly obtain sword ability with this special training... I’ve obtained the Sword Ability I from these past two hours.

The power of love is truly great.

But, there’s still one problem. What should we do with this mountain of cabbage?

...I thought of a good solution. After completing the first phase of special training, let’s provide the food to the reclamation workers. I’ll use these cabbages and make the best afternoon snack.

I’m itching to put my skills to use. Everyone will definitely be happy.

Translator’s Notes:

“Oishiku nare!” (be delicious) is the common expression you’ll see in a maid cafe. Say you order an omelette rice. The maid will serve you then draw your request with ketchup, then put her “magic” on it sincerely with those words. Imagine Kurt with that sweet voice and face, lol. (With his hands still on that absurd speed.)

If you realize, there’s a term I’ve sorely mistranslated. 熟練度, *jyukurendou*, is actually “proficiency” where I’ve been translating it as “practice” or “training”. I mistook it for another set of kanji, 鍛錬, which severely changes the context.

Chapter 13

Commoner's Snack

My sword training first began three days ago. My skill has exceeded Sword Ability II now.

Commonly speaking, a genius will need several years of intensive training to reach the first limit. The Ability will go from I to II, II to III, increasing the number. The important proficiency will exponentially increase.

However, I have an overwhelming talent and [The Fool's Desire] Skill which I obtained from ten years of relentless training. Through a secret plan involving my cooking ability and my love towards Tina, that becomes a possibility.

...Still, it pains my heart that Tina came to think of me as an eccentric. Persuading her was tough.

"Kurt-sama, what should we do with this cabbage mountain?" Tina asks while preparing the water inside the pot, then put the scraps of beef jerky inside for today's lunch. The beef jerky will become a delicious stock.

"I'm thinking about it."

In order to save the cabbages, Tina peel them one leaf at a time, but they still become fine shreds. Albeit so, the cabbage still piles up to another mountain.

By the way, I have a reason to keep using the cabbages like this. In the neighboring village, they grow cabbages and the harvest this year is abnormally great. If I let them rot, they're just going to be fertilizer.

Due to that situation, they can only be bartered for a low amount of wheat compared to last year. I bought them in massive quantity, planning to distribute them to the villagers.

"We'll distribute cabbage snacks for the workers. I've gained insights from spending these past three days on a special training to beat Jörg. I can just show up and deliver

them myself.”

There’s no point to merely deliver the cabbages, so I prepared a recipe to teach the delicious way of eating them. I’m practicing that recipe today.

“I’m glad. I think everyone will rejoice upon finally seeing Kurt-sama again.” Tina smiles while adding more firewood to the hearth. As she does, the fire flares up instantly. Tina’s fluffy tail fur bristles up.

“*Kyaa*, what’s this? It suddenly flared.”

When I look at Tina, I can tell that mana has poured from Tina into the hearth. “Tina, calm down and take a deep breath. I’ve taught you how to use mana earlier. Look at the fire closely, you’re connected to it with mana.”

“Ah, I understand. It’s true, I was thinking to lite the fire.”

“It shouldn’t be like this under normal circumstances. Tina’s element is Fire. When you have mana, you can awaken your elemental magic arte as you get in touch with a suitable one. Tina has awakened today, congratulations.”

“Wow, really?! It seems to be handy in handling fire!” Tina, while saying that, uses her mana at the hearth to turn up and diminish the fire. It’s a wonderfully convenient power.

“You are strong. You should be able to cook something even without firewood.”

“I’ll try it... Ah, it’s a success. Kurt-sama, I can prepare a warm meal even without chopping wood!” Tina swings her tail happily with sparkles in her eyes.

Wood chopping is a hard labor and makes scrubbing the stone hearth troublesome. It’s wonderful that we can settle that problem with mana.

“Yeah, it’s splendid. But I’m jealous.”

“Jealous?”

“Yeah. I have the eart element, but I haven’t awakened my elemental magic arte yet.”

With my all-seeing eyes, I know that I have the earth element. However, there’s no

indication at all that my elemental magic arte will awaken, even though I work in the fields everyday... I have a mixed feeling. Somewhere, I have to find a place where I'm even more in tune with the earth.

"Kurt-sama will definitely be fine! It'll awaken someday."

"I hope so. I think it'll become necessary sooner or later. Tina, that soup we're preparing for lunch. Can you use your mana so we can deliver it today? We should eat it there too."

"I don't mind at all. I'm looking forward to Kurt-sama's meal."

And so we head over to the reclaimed land, bringing the mountain of chopped cabbage.



We arrive at the reclaimed land. I carry an enormous stone plate on my back and a pot filled generously with soup by hand, while Tina brings the basket with all of those cabbages.

I thought of a way to use all of those cabbages; it's a simple meal made from small amounts of wheat, cabbage, and stock. However, there's a special mention for that effect.

"Everyone, how are you?!" I greet those bunch of workers.

Salt, the leader of the reclamation workers, opened his mouth, "Hey, Young Master. You've come here."

"Yeah, I've taken a break in my special training, so I come with provisions to see if there's any problems that arose."

"There's nothing right now. Oh, still, we're happy that you came around."

"I see, it's good then. I'm going to prepare something here. When it's time for you to rest, can you call everyone here?"

"Understood, I'll do so."

Then Salt returns to his fellow workers' place. I started preparing the provisions for everyone. Piling up the stones, I created a table and placed the stone plate on top of it.

In order to make it perfectly horizontal, I adjust it carefully. Though I say that, there's no stones with decent size so I cut them cleanly with a stone knife. With my Sword Ability II, it's easy to do something like that.

"Tina, please heat up this stone plate."

"Yes, Kurt-sama."

Tina intensely heats the stone with her fire element magic. What I'm making are pastries. Though I said so, it goes in the category of cheap sweets (*dagashi*), *monjayaki*.

"Young Master, I've gathered everyone."

"Okay, then let's start."

First, I pour Tina's soup into a wooden bowl... In a stock made from the leftover meat scraps from the previous meat jerky, I adjust the taste with salt. After that, I add wheat flour and cabbage. Then I added the sauce.

The sauce is a concentration made from the cabbages that got chopped too fine and turned into paste, with meat juice and vegetable scrapes in suitable amounts added into it, then flavored with vinegar, honey, and salt.

Since it's *monjayaki*, the batter is runny. That batter is first poured onto the heated stone plate in small amounts.

I hear the pleasant sizzling sound, the savoriness (*umami*) of the meat comes from the evaporated soup and sauce, exuding the smell that invites our appetite.

The villagers make gulping sound. When the heat passes a certain level, I make a hollow circle with wooden spatula, forming a wall of batter. I pour even more batter than earlier into the hollow center. The watery batter should have been oozing everywhere, but thanks to the wall, I could keep the batter in one spot.

The batter becomes semi-transparent. There's a lot of people here; since there's no need to flip it over, unlike *okonomiyaki*, I could cook something really, really big on the huge plate in one try.



“I’ve finished cooking. It’s called *monjayaki*. Since there’s a lot of water and cabbage, we can use just a little wheat flour.”

When I said that, everyone around me laughed. They get a wooden spoon one by one.

“It’s bad manners, but it should be eaten by taking directly from the stone plate with the spoon and scoop it to your mouth. First, I’ll show you how.”

In order to show them the example, I take a helping of *monja* with spoon, place it on my left hand and bring it to my mouth.

The savoriness of meat that generously spreads in the soup with the sweetness of cabbage, then the sourness from the sauce all mix together inside my mouth. The unique soft texture of cooked cabbage tastes good.

“*Hafu, hafu*, yep, it turned out great. It looks bad but it’s delicious. Now, eat them.”

At first, the villagers look timid as they open their mouths, but as soon as they take a mouthful, the look in their eyes change, and take a portion one after another. As a person starts, the rest of them reaches out and chews on the *monjayaki*, uncaring if they burn their mouth.

“This is really good!”

“Yeah, somehow the taste lingers.”

“Even though it looks like vomit.”

“Oi, don’t say that or we can’t go on.”

The villagers laugh together. I'm glad that they seem happy about it.

The stone plate was covered by a monstrous size of *monjayaki*, but it disappear in no time from everyone's vigorous devouring. There's a limit to the size of the stone plate, so not everyone can eat at the same time. As soon as they got their share, I cook another helping of *monjayaki*.

My hands' movements become indiscriminately good. I become exceedingly perceptive in timing the heat and when I mix the flour in, I could easily, no, exactly imagine how it will turn out.

"Ah, that's right. That's how it is."

I get the reason. My Cooking Ability has risen. I've been doing special training in the sword, but that's also cooking. With overflowing love, the emotional value was maxed out. Adding that to practicing day and night, my Cooking Ability has firmly sublimed to level III.

This is a blessing in disguise. A level III is the ability that Rank B or above can reach in a lifetime.

"Now, everyone, eat all of them up. I'm going to use the cabbage to the last bit!"

When I said that, the men are all lifting up their spoons, and...

"YEAH!" comes their enthusiastic reply.

Chapter 14

Earth Magic Arte Awakens

Finally, there's only two days left before the duel. My Sword Ability has reached level III. My physical condition is also flawless.

I only have one problem left.

"Kurt-sama, what's wrong? You look troubled."

"Well, you know. I don't have any weapon to use in the duel."

The only weapons that I can somehow use are the spear, farm tools, and stone knife. At this rate, I would probably go out in the selection ceremony with my stone knife, but that doesn't look good at all.

"Swords... There's no one in this village who has one."

"If we have enough iron to make a sword, we use it for the farm tools. If we have the materials, we could bring them to the blacksmith in the main village. It really pains me that we can't get help from him because he's Jörg's follower."

People who have expertise are all gathered in the main village, and on top of that, there are a lot of them who butter up to Jörg, who has the biggest chance to be the next feudal lord. Most of them are my enemies.

"Moreover, I'm really attached to this guy that I've always been using. I feel my own hesitation towards wielding a new weapon."

I grip the handle of the spear in my hand. It feels natural, I knew it. I've perfectly adapted to this guy that it feels that it's a part of my body.

For a full ten years, this guy has always been my pal. If I could, I want to continue going through everything with him from now on too.

However, there's nothing I can do about lacking a Spear Ability. As I thought, I couldn't

treat the spear like a sword in the same way that I see a stone knife as one. At the very least, a cutlery with slashing purpose is important.

“It seems complicated... if only we can change Kurt-sama’s spear into a sword.”

“That’s it.”

I’ve gotten a sudden epiphany. The spear should be remolded into a sword through magic arte. If I do it that way, I can obtain a sword, and I could keep fighting with this guy who has always been fighting together with me.

Also, there’s something else in my mind. If it’s “that *katana*” which is a *katana* AND a spear at the same time, shouldn’t I get the correction from my Sword Ability while having an advantage from the spear skills I’ve been cultivating?

“Could it work that way?”

“It should be. That is, if I could awaken my earth elemental magic arte.”

Earth magic arte could even manipulate gems. I predict that changing the shape of a spear is completely plausible.

“In that case, the next thing we should do is to awaken Kurt-sama’s elemental magic arte somehow, right?”

“The book mentioned about the importance of being one with the earth.”

My all-seeing eyes also gave me the same answer. When I could be one with the earth, the earth would respond to me. Thus, there’s no other option than making me feel the earth with my whole body.

“Tina, I’ll see and try if I can awaken my earth magic arte in half a day. I’m going to play with the field’s soil back there, with a method that’ll allow me to feel the earth better than ever.”

If I spend just half a day, I can catch up even if it ends up in failure. If it’s no good, I should just give up.

“Then, I will return here with a lunch box later.”

“I’ll be waiting with pleasure. I’ll show you my effort while looking forward to Tina’s lunch box.”

And thus, I walk outside to obtain an earth magic arte.



“To increase the sense of unity, huh?”

Since I haven’t awakened from all the severe fieldwork that I’ve been doing until now, merely touching with hands shouldn’t suffice. Tina has awakened her power from using firewood, but there’s a huge individual difference.

“Should I try plunging into the ground?”

I’ve spread the nutrition-filled humus ground that I transported from the forest across the field. Then, I plunge myself into it, covering my whole body with soil.

“Hm, this is still not enough, huh?”

I don’t get any notion at all. I still need even more sense of unity. So I soak the ground with water I fetched earlier, turning the soil into mud.

I dive again for the second time. Since the ground has become mud, I feel my body somehow become one with earth more than before. Let’s keep trying this for now. I shut my eyes while feeling the earth with my whole body.



It’s been an hour since then. I can feel the power of earth slightly better than before, but as I thought, this is still not enough. Spending more time than this is useless.

More than not losing the direction, it’s better if I can deepen my connection with the earth. I’m confident that I just need a little more.

“Kurt-sama, I’m coming with your lunch box!”

Tina approaches me. She carries a basket and flask, smiling sweetly, maybe because her cooking today came out satisfactorily. However, she pauses, her smile becomes muddy.

“Ah, thank you. I’m going to try a little bit more, so can you wait with the food for a while?”

“I’m okay with waiting, but, uhm, what is it that you’ve been doing?”

“I’m feeling the earth with my body to sense the unity with the earth. I’ve never felt the earth like this before, you know?”

“O-oh, I see.”

Tina shows an understanding face for me even though she seems surprised.

Well then, what should I do now? Soaking my body in the mud with my arms and legs stretched open is still not enough. I’m probably still too lenient in this. Rising up to my legs, I break free from the mud.

“Tina, I have a request.”

“What is it, Kurt-sama?”

“Seems like it’s not enough to soak in the mud. I’ll need you to bury me alive.”

I strengthened my physical ability with mana, then rapidly dig out a hole in the ground and put myself inside. The hole’s depth is enough to let my head stay out from the neck up.

“Tina, bury me with soil.”

“Y-yes, Kurt-sama!”

Tina helps covering me with soil. I become unable to move a finger. My sense of unity with the earth has grown again.

“Kurt-sama, isn’t it too harsh?”

“I’m fine. It even feels good.” Being enclosed by Mother Earth makes me feel exquisitely relieved. Seems like I’m almost there.

“Tina, give it the finishing touch. Please bury up to my head too.”

“If I do that, you will die!”

“If I awaken my earth magic arte, I can drive it away by myself.”

“What if the power is not awakened?”

“Count to 100, if there’s no movement, dig me out. I can still hold my breath to that extent.”

“...I understand. Then, I will start.”

Tina covers my head with soil from above. My sight gradually becomes darker and it gets more difficult to breathe. When she finishes, my head is completely buried.

It’s quiet. Moreover, it’s warm, somehow. Sound and light are gone, and I come to hear the earth’s pulse.

That’s it. This is definitely the power of the earth. Before me, a brand new scene is spreading. The world changes. This is a world as seen by the Earth Spirits. I’ve grasped something from it.

“Kurt-sama, it’s the limit. I’ll dig you up if nothing happens in ten seconds!”

I can hear Tina’s panicking and almost crying voice. I regret making her worry over me. Thank you. It’s okay now. I’m all right.

It’s awakened. This is earth magic arte.

[I’ll be in your care.]

That’s right, when I talk to the earth, the earth that wraps around me moves. I feel the soil that weights down on my head disappear, and I open my eyes.

Tina’s head is right before me. She’s crouching down, looking in my direction.

“Kurt-sama, has your earth magic arte awakened?”

“Yes, I finally obtained the earth magic arte.”

The earth that enveloped me removes itself and piles under my feet, propelling me out

of the ground.

“Now, my clothes are covered with mud. I should wash up and change my clothes, would you please look away?”

“Y-yes, Kurt-sama.”

Tina becomes flustered and moves her eyes away before covering her face with both hands. Since it's Tina, I'm embarrassed if I'm seen naked.

After I make sure that Tina has averted her eyes, I take my clothes off and wash the mud off with water. I run the water through the cloth before wearing a new set.

“Thanks for waiting, I've finished changing.”

When I look at Tina, she did turn her face away, but she looks in my direction with a sidelong glance through the gaps of her fingers.

“Tina.”

I step to her front and flick her forehead.

“O... ouch. What are you doing, Kurt-sama?”

“I told you not to look, but you ignored my instruction.”

“Uh, that's... I'm sorry.” Tina apologizes while pressing on her forehead.

Oh well, it's not like it leaves a bad feeling. Tina has also grown to that age. Maybe she's curious about a male's naked body.



“Tina, you don’t want it to happen to you, right? To be peeked while naked.”

“I don’t mind if it’s Kurt-sama... Uhm, no, I didn’t say anything. That, um, I just gave in to temptation.”

“Then, as revenge, I’ll do the same and peek on you when you’re bathing. Then you’ll understand how I feel.”

As I told her the joke, her face blushed heavily.

“It’s a joke. There’s no way I’d do something like that.”

“Ah, Kurt-sama. You’re making fun of me!”

I force a laugh.

“The earth magic arte that I obtained is thanks to Tina’s help, so I’ll forgive you this time. I want to be reborn anew in the spear.”

I take the spear leaning on the wall and grip it tightly. I’ve grown firmly accustomed to this sensation in my hand. As I expected, I want to fight along with this guy.

“Yes, Kurt-sama!” Tina replies spiritedly.

However, I can hear a cute stomach growl sound. As though she’s extremely embarrassed, her kitsune ears are flapping down, her face blushing in a very different kind of way than the face she made earlier.

“My stomach is empty, let’s eat the lunch box you’ve brought before. I’ll show you my reborn self after that.”

“Uuu... Kurt-samaaa...” Even though she’s embarrassed, she still firmly nods. She must have felt really hungry.

Chapter 15

A New Weapon and A Vow with Tina

“Tina, today’s sandwich is great. You don’t use fish often.”

“Yes, when we went to the main village, I exchanged some beef meat with smoked fish.”

“The salty fish works really well with the sauce.”

Tina’s sandwich is made by spreading butter on the bread, adding my finely sliced cabbage and the lean part of smoked fish, then smearing handmade sauce on it. The smoked fish is made by dipping it in water to make it soft at the same time with adding moderate amounts of salt in it. Its great flavor from the salting, and the salty-sweet sauce that Tina made from the leftover vegetable and the meat scraps stimulates the appetite.

“This sauce is more delicious than usual. Oh, you used honey, didn’t you?”

“When I ate the *monjayaki* that Kurt-sama made yesterday, I tried adding the sweetness to the sauce since it seemed like it would become more delicious. It’s a big hit.”

Salty-sweet sauce really fits the briny smoked fish.

“Will you make this again for me?”

“Absolutely, Kurt-sama!”

Tina smiles happily. Seeing that kind of Tina makes me feel that the meal is even more delicious. Our happy lunch time passes like this.



After lunch, I gripped my spear. From now on, the spear will be reborn into a new weapon. The earth magic arte could intervene with the ore. I’m going to change the shape of the iron.

“Answer me, earth spirit.”

The elemental magic uses the power that fills nature. By borrowing the power of the earth spirit, I’m dealing with the spear. However...

“As I thought, I can’t do anything when the iron is like this, huh?”

It’s an earth magic arte that I worked so hard to obtain, but as I thought, changing the shape of iron with the earth magic arte that I memorized doesn’t seem possible for me. Processing metal is too soon for my current self. I need to provide the ability to temper with magic. This current power level honestly won’t do, as I expected.

“Kurt-sama, is it no good?”

“The iron is a little too solid. If I could make it softer, I probably could do something about it.”

“Softer... I could manage something, I think...”

Tina’s face looks enlightened.

“Kurt-sama, can you let me handle your precious spear? Perhaps it’ll turn out bad, but I think I have a method to make it softer.” Tina looks at me straight in the eyes while asking that.

This spear hasn’t been touched by anyone other than me up until now. But I don’t mind if it’s Tina. Moreover, even if she turns it into something unusable, she’s the only one that I would forgive.

“Either way, it’s no good in its current state. I’ll gamble on Tina.”

“Kurt-sama’s spear. I’ve received it.” Tina receives my spear with both hands, gripping tightly.

What could she possibly be doing? As I see her, I could feel the sudden influx of mana. Holding the handle with both hands, she closes her eyes.

“Kurt-sama’s spear will be heated up by my flame.”

A flame blows up, then it gets sucked into the spear. The iron tip becomes red hot. The

air around it is warped. Tina's flame heats the iron until it's on the brink of melting.

The elemental magic is a magic that borrows the spirit's power that fills the atmosphere. Tina is greatly loved by the fire spirits. Her power is tremendous even though she doesn't have any Ability.

If the iron almost melts, my earth magic arte should be able to do something about it.

"Thanks, Tina."

Not having flame attribute, I can't do anything firsthand to the red hot spear. That's why I put my hand above Tina's hand.

"If the spear is already heated and softened by the flame, I can change the shape with my power. Really, Tina, you always manage to surprise me. I love you."

"Kurt-sama, that, please stop saying something like that. I get too happy that I can't muster any strength."

I can't see her face, but from behind her, I can see her nape blushing red.

"We're going to begin. Tina, continue to heat it up with this current strength of your flame."

"Yes, Kurt-sama!"

Borrowing the power of the earth spirits, I'm working on the spear by using earth magic arte. As I do so, the red hot spear starts to move in twists and turns. I try to imagine a brand new shape. The spear starts changing shape following that image.

Moreover, I don't just change the shape. I forge it under pressure, take out the impurities, give it sharpness and tenacity. Tina melts it with great effort. This opportunity improves its basic performance. The spear is reborn. It's reborn together with me.

Hey, pal... Lend your strength to me from now on as well. I hope that we can keep advancing together without any compromise.

"Tina, it's good now. Please slowly cool the spear down."

The flame attribute magic is controlling the quantity of heat. It doesn't only increase the temperature, it can also cool things down.

"Yes, Kurt-sama!"

Cooling the iron rapidly will damage it, so I ask her to be really careful. With cold sweat, Tina little by little takes away the heat.

Then, finally it's completed. My new pal.

"Thank you, Tina. We made it. My new spear."

"*That* is Kurt-sama's new spear... Is it all right to use a spear, though?"

"Yes, I'm sure it's all right. This is as much a spear as it is a sword. A weapon with two facets."

Let's try its practicality. I get in the ready pose with the new weapon, then I wield it. The spear is speeding up. This world's irrational power, [Sword Ability]'s power is working to perfection.

I'm glad. It is recognized as a spear *and* a sword.

"Awesome, it's the first time I've seen such a sharp blow. More than Kurt-sama ever has, more than Jörg-sama... And even faster than Kurt-sama's father that I saw once."

"I think so too."

The power of wielding a spear doesn't display both the Ability's Skill and my own martial skill as additions, but as multiplications. If I don't have the Ability, there's nothing I can do about it, but it's not like the pure martial skill doesn't have any meaning either. From the start, the sharper the technique used, the blow strengthened by the Ability would improve in strength and speed. The Sword Ability III's acceleration on top of my ten years worth of training combined, they become like this.

"But, Kurt-sama said that Kurt-sama couldn't win in the spear."

"That's why I made it this way. Even though it's a spear, it's also not."

I show my newly reshaped spear in front of Tina.

“The blade is curved at the tip... This is a spear, yet it’s also a slashing weapon, isn’t it?”

“True, this is a *naginata*. Its other name is a glaive.”

The altered spear doesn’t become a sword. It’s a *naginata*.

It’s different than a spear as its tip is a blade just like a Japanese sword. In other words, the reach is long, it can pierce like a spear, and it can cut like a sword. Perhaps, it’s the most excellent weapon in a pool of similar weapons.

“It looks just like a spear, but it’s actually a sword, isn’t it?”

“To be accurate, it is both a sword and a spear. That’s why, I could utilize both the spear ability piling up until now and my newly awakened sword talent. It’s that kind of weapon.”

The shape has changed. My spear. But it still fits in my hands just like always. With this guy, there’s no need to start tempering a new sword ability from zero. It’s great how I could just add slashing movements to the spear routine I’ve been doing.

“With this, it’ll definitely be your win!”

“That’s true, I’ll definitely win.”

I have confidence in winning. With the irrational power that comes from Sword Ability, with the intense training I’ve done for the whole ten years, and wielding the weapon that could utilize them both, there’s no way I could lose.

“Ah, that’s right, Tina. Thanks. Tina is really the best.”

I hold and grasp Tina’s hand.

“Ku-kurt-sama.” Tina’s face become deep red as she becomes a little panicky.

“This *naginata* couldn’t be made without Tina. Thank you so much. Tina has helped me again, you are really my Goddess of Fortune.”

Whenever I was lost on my path, whenever I met a wall that I couldn’t surpass by myself, Tina never failed to help me. The fact that I could come this far almost makes

me believe in occult things. I've really come to see Tina as my Goddess of Fortune, my fated person.

"Th-that's too much, Kurt-sama. I just wish to become useful to Kurt-sama. Because Kurt-sama awakened my mana, I could use the flame. Even so, if this power can become useful for Kurt-sama, I will always, always use it for Kurt-sama's sake."

While looking flustered, Tina still answered strongly.

Always, huh? It sounds wonderful.

Right now, it's my first made naginata, but next, I could make whisks, cake knives, and other necessary utensils to make various pastries.

"I'm happy that you said that. Tina. I also hope that I can always be with Tina."

Tina becomes bashful, grasping back the hand I grasped her with. I didn't say that because I only wanted to use her fire magic arte. I sincerely love this girl.

"I want to show you my gratitude, what do you want?"

Tina makes a thinking gesture. Then, she opens her mouth nervously, "Then, I wish for Kurt-sama's pastry... A special pastry that's only for me. A pastry that only Kurt-sama and I will know."

I laugh bitterly. What a difficult wish.

A pastry for Tina's sake only can't be something superficial. It shows an image in my head, a pastry made of Tina's image. A pastry that is silver-colored, warm, covered with layers of veils, and with a precious gem-like center. It'd better be that kind of pastry.

"I understand. I'll make a pastry that's only for Tina. With my whole power... no, even more than that. However, I want more time allowance. If I make a pastry that's worthy of Tina, I need more time. The base that will show Tina's image at a glance, I want to refine that pastry until I'm satisfied."

Tina flashes a smile, akin to a flower blossoming.

"Yes, I'll wait. Let alone ten years, I'll even wait for twenty years!"

“No, I won’t let you wait that long, though. Right here and now, I promise you that I will make the best pastry in the world for Tina’s sake only.”

That is not something that I’ll do just because I have the recipe from Earth. No matter how long time passes, I will gift the greatest pastry, my unique recipe, just for Tina. I take out my pinky finger.

“Kurt-sama, you absolutely have to do it, you know?”

“Of course, I absolutely will do it.”

Looking deeply moved, Tina nods and entwines her pinky finger with mine. This is the seal to a vow in this world. We both laugh together and unwrap our fingers.

Chapter 16

Gathering Pastry's Ingredients

At last, it's the day before the selection ceremony. I'm doing the morning session of my training. In my hands, there's the naginata that Tina and I created together.

The naginata is a spear with the tip of a Japanese sword-like blade. Mine is the unusual type with relatively less curvature. With a larger curve, it's easier to slash. With a smaller curve, it's easier to thrust. I leave the main function to thrusting.

Reaching level III in Sword Ability is enough. Right now, it's crucial to get used to this new weapon, so I'm getting my body used to the timing management.

"Ha!"

I try the combination of consecutive thrusts then a slash. Without hesitation, I move my body until I can hear an air-splitting sound. I pay meticulous care to the center of gravity and grip sensation of the spear, my pal for more than ten years that became the base for the naginata. I get my body to become familiar to the newly transformed naginata as much as possible.

At the end, I do the opposite combination, from slash to thrust. Assuming that the thrust can be dodged, I move while predicting how to attack a routed enemy who doesn't have sufficient posture. Inside my head, I tear my imaginary enemy to pieces.

"Fuuuu."

I stop my movements, then exhale a deep breath as I close my eyes. Today's training comes crashing down inside my head again as I revise the problematic points as well as the improved parts. The greatest problem is that my own movements became faster than I had imagined when being propelled by the Sword Ability; I haven't made sufficient adjustment for that. I should make upward adjustment for my imaginary body movement.

From that, I open my eyes and try the improved movement. Yep, this feels good. It has become a little more preferable. Let's stop today's training session here.

“Kurt-sama! Thank you for your hard work!” Tina rushes over to me. I receive a piece of clean cloth from her to dry my sweat.

“Thank you, Tina.”

“Your movements became more and more fluid, and they became faster too.”

“Yes, I actually feel that, personally. Still, my body sometimes moves too fast to control. It’s like managing a runaway horse. Today’s form is not even my full strength, which I cannot display yet.”

Because my movements’ speed is raised several times all of a sudden, I feel a huge sense of discomfort. Therefore, I curb down my power to a manageable extent.

“If it’s Kurt-sama, you’ll be fine! You can do it soon.”

“As I thought, even for me, it’s impossible to do that in one night. But winning over Jörg with this is still no sweat. I can wield 60% of my strength without any problem.”

In order to display the martial arts ingrained in my body, I need to show that much. Still, if I’m not thinking consciously, I could show my full power with my whole body in one strike.

“It’s more than he deserves.”

“That’s true. Even if I show my full power, I’m going to train until it’s alright to do so.”

For the sake of becoming a pastry chef, perhaps strength isn’t that important. Still, as feudal lord, I want both the power to protect my people and to help those who are precious to me.

“I’m going to help secretly too.”

“Tina’s help doesn’t need to be done humbly or in secret. Just look at this naginata, I could make this thanks to Tina. That’s right, this guy was reborn through Tina’s and my hands, so it could as well be our child, huh?”

“Our child...”

Tina’s cheeks become red as she looks at my naginata with a dazed expression.

“We should grant this guy a name. I want to give it a name that fits Tina’s image. A silver-colored radiance. Ginsen (silver flash). I want to call it that way. Tina doesn’t mind, right?”

When my mind thinks of Tina, I can only see her silver-colored hair and tail. She’s my light. Her silver radiance, therefore it has to be Ginsen.

“...Our child.”

Tina is still inside her own world in a daze. Let’s pull her back to reality, shall we? I pat her head with my hand. Since that doesn’t seem enough to pull her away from her own world, I pinch her fox ear lightly.

“Ku-kurt-sama!?”

She’s back, finally.

“The name of Tina’s image, Ginsen, can I give it to name my pal here?”

“Absolutely! Please use it without reserve!”

“Thank you. It feels like Tina will be there, fighting together with me.”

Tina lifts her head and smiles.

“I’m happy that it feels like Kurt-sama and I will always be together. Kurt-sama’s naginata... No, Ginsen-chan, please receive my feelings!”

Tina touches the blade of naginata with her hand, fervently pouring her thoughts inside it. Does she mean to inject power into it? Her silver fox ears are standing upright, and her long and fluffy tail is pointed straight at the sky.

“Please receive a lot of my power so you can help Kurt-sama!”

Tina’s breathing becomes rough. It’s no longer a joke at this point. With a wry smile, I caress Tina’s head. Her eyes narrow in pleasure.

“Kurt-sama, what else should we do today?”

“Today, I have to prepare for tomorrow’s selection ceremony, then rest, I think.”

“Is the special training over?”

“Yeah, I’ve done everything I could. The rest of it will be decided by putting myself in a perfect condition. Not only the physical body, but the mind too.”

I can heal all my fatigue to perfection with Recovery. Indeed, my body has become used to the naginata... to Ginsen from continuously wielding it without rest since the day I obtained it. If I use Recovery, I don’t even need to sleep. Still, I intentionally slept a few hours last night, and today’s rest is to heal the fatigue of my mind, for which play and sleep are important.

“Yosh, Tina. Let’s go on a date today. Will you keep me company, Princess?”

I put Ginsen leaning on the wall, then reverently hold my hand out to Tina.

“Where shall we go, My Prince?”

Tina bashfully takes my hand.

The mood is good. She matches her words to my joke right on the spot. I grasp Tina’s hand and bring her outside, walking into the woods.



“Kurt-sama, I found yam (*yamaimo*)’s ivy.”

“Tina, that’s a great discovery.”

Tina and I gather the blessing of the forest. Even if I call it a date, we ended up collecting edible things while walking leisurely in the mountain. Even so, the both of us are having fun. It’s not bad doing something like this. Moreover, actually, I also have another objective, which is to collect ingredients for tomorrow’s pastry-making as a treat for everyone.

“Then I’ll entrust finding the bulbils (*mukago*) to Tina. I’ll be in charge of the yams.”

“Leave the bulbils to me!”

Unexpectedly unknown, yam appears as an ivy plant wrapping itself around a nearby tree, then bears small purple fruit. Yam’s fruits are called bulbils. They can be eaten

by boiling it with salt. They're soft and flaky like potatoes, and has a similar flavor to chestnuts. The flavor is extremely delicious.

I can use this as a staple food in exchange of bread for a while. I can save wheat flour this way. Tina diligently put the bulbils she gathers into the basket.

"Well then, I should pick up the pace too."

If I dig on the ground around the yam's ivy, of course there will be yams. However, I need to be absurdly patient when digging yams.

The reason is, yam's size can easily become longer than 1 meter. In other words, I have to dig even deeper than that. If I just pull it out, it will probably snap. Therefore, I have to be quite careful in digging the area around the yam so it won't get broken.

"Kurt-sama, the ivy is wonderfully thick, so it must be big, isn't it?"

"I think so too. I'm digging with great expectations."

Looking at the leaves and the ivy to begin with, I can imagine the size of the yam underground. This one is a big hit, which also means I must put a great effort in digging it up.

"Was it all right not to bring a shovel here?"

"It's unnecessary."

I have earth magic arte. I can ask the earth spirits to work. I know that I can pick up the underground yam and the surrounding soil by hand.

[What is your request?]

As I ask the earth, the earth starts moving. The soil around the yam was kept out, leaving the bare naked tuber hanging alone inside the hole. Tina, who has collected the bulbils, peeks into this and her eyes lighten up.

"Amazing, Kurt-sama's earth magic arte is really convenient! You can dig as many yams as you want this way!"

"Yeah, it's simply convenient."

Usually, we need more than 2 hours for roots more than 100 cm.

“How is the yam? Should we use it as soup ingredients? Or maybe grate it into a side dish? Ah, or like, like...”

Liking yams, Tina speaks up about many ways to process them.

“Tina, sorry. This isn’t for us. After the selection ceremony is over, I’m thinking to make some pastries along with the new feudal lord’s greetings. I want to make this into the pastry’s ingredients.”

After the selection ceremony, a festival will be held. The fief’s people as well as Margrave Fernande’s attendants who will attend there amount to around 200 people. Margrave Fernande will come with eggs, but I need to provide the rest of the ingredients.

As I thought, the ingredients currently at my disposal aren’t enough. If I use yam, I could reduce the need for wheat to just 1/3 the necessary amount. If I use yam and wheat in a 2:1 ratio, I can make a moist dough. I could probably depend on my father to lend me some ingredients, but I’d hate to do that. I want to gather the ingredients with my own power.

“Uuu, I’m disappointed.”

Tina looks downhearted. Seeing that kind of her makes me smile bitterly.

“Then let’s look for another yam. If there’s a lot of them, we can secure enough for our own portion.”

“Yes, I’ll work hard!”

Tina’s fox ears twitch, listening around. She looks deep in search to seriously look for other yams.

“Still, it’s not really a problem, because we’re going to look for other necessary ingredients for the pastry other than yams in the forest.”

“It’s fine! I’ll find them soon!”

I chase after Tina, who looks really eager as she walks forward, with a wry smile. Well,

then, there are still some ingredients left to make the best pastry. Let's work on finding them.

Chapter 17

Walnut Oil of the Forest's Blessing

In the end, not 30 minutes after that, Tina found the second yam.

Since two tubers are more than enough for the pastry's ingredient, one of them should be eaten in the house. Tina looks really happy when she carries the yam that I dug.

"Heave ho, the fox goes *konkonkon*♪" She seems to be in an extremely good mood, to sing something weird as she opens her mouth.

"Flutter fluttery tail, *konkonkon*♪" Matching the song, Tina's tail swings around cutely.

"Only the tip of the ears goes blaaack♪"

It's a weird song, but somehow it's pleasing to listen to. Next time, I should ask her to sing it in a quiet place.



"This place is so nostalgic."

"It was winter the last time we came here."

Together with Tina, we enter a small cavern inside the forest. I call it a cavern, but it's a really small spot that only spans a minute walking.

There is still some snow left inside the cavern. This place is Tina's and my cold storage. By piling up as much snow as possible in the middle of winter in this cavern, the snow won't melt until around the end of spring. If we put what we get during autumn inside this cavern, it could possibly be preserved for a long time.

There's a vase lying inside the cavern. We crammed it with walnuts found at the end of autumn.

The walnuts can stay for half a year inside a cool place. Walnuts, full of nutrition, are

the emergency rations for winter when there are blessing of the forest, or when there's not enough food by the end of winter, or when there's a food shortage due to the crop failure in the spring.

It's a village with 50 residents or so, thus this small amount of walnuts can prolong the lives of the people for a while if we save carefully.

"Tina, the walnuts that we picked, I was thinking to use them as pastry ingredients. Do you mind?"

Since the walnuts here are those picked by both Tina and I, I can't use them without Tina's acknowledgement.

"It's fine... What a shame, though." Tina sounds a little dejected.

Every year, if there's no misfortune that pushes us to eat the walnuts as emergency good, we both enjoy it and share it in the provisions sent to the villagers. The walnuts are our treat, so Tina surely has been waiting in anticipation too.

"Sorry, Tina."

"...Can I have a single selfish request?"

"Yes, of course."

"Today's meal, please use some walnuts to make something wonderful."

"I understand. I'll make a meal using walnuts to the best of my skills."

"Then I'll gladly wait for it!"

It's the request from sweet Tina. I must answer this request. Let's make an extraordinary meal using these walnuts. But before that...

I grip and smash the walnut's shell, taking out the white meat and pop it into Tina's mouth. Eating a little is no problem at all. While showing a surprised expression, Tina properly chews on the meat then shows a joyful face.



Afterwards, the both of us returned to the house after picking plenty of hardy kiwi (*sarunashi*) fruit and edible wild plants like *nobiru* (wild rocambole) and *udo* (ginseng-like plant). The date ended like this, and as I walked down the mountain with Tina, I feel a little tired in my mind.

No, I still have one thing left to do. I must make a superb dinner for Tina's sake. Walking towards the kitchen, I spread the walnuts.

"Kurt-sama, what are you making?"

"Walnut oil. We can squeeze the oil out of the walnuts. It's convenient to use, since it's just like butter. I can use some for today's dinner as well as tomorrow's pastry."

To tell the truth, for making the pastry tomorrow, the lack of butter is more severe than the lack of wheat. My pioneering village has nothing but a few goats as domestic animals.

No matter what, it's impossible to prepare the essential butter for 200 portions of pastries. That's why, I'm using walnut oil.

The oil taken from walnuts have a hint of sweetness and a rich flavor. Walnut oil cannot substitute for butter, but it's a great rival. Depending on how I use it, I can make even more delicious sweets than when using butter.

"So walnuts can produce oil too, can they?"

"Yes, it's really tasty too. Please wait while I prepare today's dinner using walnut oil."

I smile and spread the walnuts on top of the table as far as possible. In my hand, I have my beloved stone knife. And then...

"Amazing, splitting those hard walnut shells in halves like that!"

With the knife, I cut them in two. Thanks to Sword Ability III, I have a strengthened slash. Thanks to that, the walnut shells which usually take a huge effort to split have now been cut into two.

"Tina, can you collect the white meat inside the walnuts into one place?"

“Please relax, you can leave it to me!”

By using forks, Tina takes out the walnut meat one by one. Looking at her sideways, I continue to cut the walnuts in halves.



“Kurt-sama, you’ve collected a lot of walnut meat.”

“Yeah, thanks to Tina, we can go to the next step now.”

The wooden bowl is filled to the brim with walnut meat. I wrap it with a coarse cloth, then hit the wrapped walnuts with the wide part of the knife. Inside it, the walnuts becomes shattered. Then I squeeze it tightly, without forgetting to strengthen my physical strength to the limit with mana.

“Woowoow, oil is dripping from the cloth!”

The oil that is trickling from the cloth goes into a tub. The amber-colored oil is gradually piling up in the bottom.

“The oil really comes out. That surprises me.”

“This is walnut oil. Actually, even if eaten raw, the oil is still delicious. Do you want to try some?”

“May I? Then...”

Tina licks the walnut oil.

“Ah, delicious. It has the walnut’s flavor. The flavor is rich, and it’s light and sweet.”

“Right? The pastry made from this would definitely taste good.”

“Yes! I’ll be waiting for it!”

The ingredients for the pastry I’ll make tomorrow are the eggs brought by Margrave Fernande, the wheat harvested in this village, the walnut oil collected from the mountain, the yam I dug, then some honey, the hardy kiwi we picked today... which is a green, 5 cm-sized native species that is similar to kiwi fruits.

Other than eggs, everything is procured from this village or forest. Each one of them is a superb ingredient, and since they are collected from the same forest, they have great compatibility. The ingredients that receive the brimming life force of the forest will certainly perform a hundred percent and with them, I'll make the pastry that will highlight the deliciousness of the eggs.

I'll be making a golden-colored pastry. I'll have to think of a name befitting a golden-colored pastry.

"Well then, I've taken enough oil. With this, the pastry's ingredients are all present. Tomorrow, I'll present my ace pastry for Tina as well, so please expect to eat it."

"Having to wait until tomorrow... I think I'm going to die."

Tina looks bitter while staring at me. I wryly laugh, then went to bottle up the walnut oil.

While working on it, I'm smiling. Western confectionery has four crucial ingredients. Though somewhat imperfect, I've gathered all of them at my disposal.

Wheat flour... the wheat harvested in the village and yams

Eggs... laid by chickens that will be brought by Margrave Fernande

Butter... the village's goat butter and walnut oil

Sugar... honey

Since I have these four, I could use my skills to my satisfaction. I have great expectations starting tomorrow.

"Oh well, the pastry is for tomorrow, but as I promised, today I'm going to make something wonderful for dinner using walnuts. You can count on it, so forgive me this once."

"What are you making?"

With great expectations in her eyes, Tina looks at me.

"I'll only give you the spoiler that it's a treat using deer meat and walnuts. The rest is

something to be expected once it's done. Not only tasty, it's also a cooking to pray for good luck."

Inside my head, the image of cooking comes to me. Light flavored meat, with the richness from walnuts. With a special sauce, it's surely something that will make Tina happy.

Chapter 18

Venison and Walnut Special Cuisine

I go to the storehouse behind the house to take the ingredients for dinner. It's for the sake of making a treat using walnuts as per Tina's request.

I enter the storehouse. Inside, there's a whole venison hanging, pre-treated by taking out the intestines. This is cured since two weeks ago, an offering item to supply the main village on the selection ceremony occasion tomorrow.

The main village actually has near 200 people attending the festival, so it cannot provide all the food. For that, each village has been demanded to bring over a food offering.

For the sake of the offering item, I can't give that burden to the villagers. Therefore, I alone entered the forest and hunted a deer with my mana-strengthened physique. Even Father should accept one whole deer like this.

"Smells good. It's curing well."

If the meat is prepared this way, it will become more tasty. It should be eaten around this time. The prepared venison is cut for Tina's and my portion. It's not as if we're sneaking a bite. This is done to confirm whether it's cured well or not, so to say, a sampling.

...It's just a coincidence that I take the highest quality of the tastiest sirloin cut.



I return to the kitchen with the meat, where Tina rushes up to me.

"Tina, I'm going to start cooking, do you want to help?"

"Yes, Kurt-sama!"

Tina, who eats dried meat and rarely sees it raw, looks at the venison with sparkling

eyes. It's a luxurious gem. We must enjoy this as much as we can.

"Can I ask for a strong fire from you?"

"I'll do it!"

Without even inserting firewood, a flame is blowing up in the hearth. Lately, I've been cooking by utilizing Tina's flame magic arte. The reasons are that we don't need firewood, it doesn't stain the hearth, and it's easy to adjust the heat level. It's such a highly convenient magic arte. Now, I can't imagine cooking without Tina.

Strong fire, medium fire, low fire. Since Tina has properly memorized those levels, she can make perfect adjustment of the heat level even with broad requests.

I put a frying pan on top of the hearth. This frying pan is something that we made together, using the iron sand collected by earth magic arte. As I thought, it feels good to have iron utensils. I'm seething in excitement.

Heating up the frying pan is the pre-cooking stage. I cut the tendons of the deer's sirloin meat, making it tender. Then, I mix water and a small amount of wheat flour, and turn a previously baked bread into bread crumbs. I rub some salt over the venison, dip it in the water and flour mixture, then coat it with the bread crumbs. Like this, the pre-cooking is completed.

"Kurt-sama, the frying pan is properly heated now."

"Thank you."

I return to the spot before the frying pan, then coat it with the walnut oil. As I do so, the fragrance of the oil spreads at once around me. When the walnut oil gets heated, an alluring scent spreads out.

"Woooow, it smells so good."

"Not yet, it's only the beginning. Tina, medium fire, please."

"Yes, Kurt-sama!"

I put the two pieces of venison that has gone through the pre-cooking stage into the walnut oil-coated frying pan. There's a juicy sizzling sound resounding here.

“Hey, you should understand why I said it was only the beginning, right?”

“Yes, I already feel satisfied from this smell.”

The smell of venison’s juice blends with the smell from the walnut oil, creating a luscious smell around us. What I’m cooking is walnut-flavored deer meat cutlet.

The venison is light and delicate. If I use animal-based oil, it will kill the flavor. However, the walnut oil’s gentle flavor won’t destroy the deer’s flavor and enhance the savoriness instead. Since I’m deep frying both sides, I flip over the meat.

“Wow, such a pretty color.” With an admiring voice, Tina looks at the venison cutlet that has turned into a beautiful *kitsune* color.

In the blink of an eye, the heating is completed. The venison is purposefully made into 1 cm thick slices. It’s the thickness that will showcase the harmony between the coating’s crispiness and the meat’s juiciness the best.

“Yosh, it turned out good. It just needs the finishing touches.”

I put both venison cutlets on the plates.

Then I make the finishing sauce. The crushed walnuts that’s left from the oil extraction, is blended with the *sarunashi* I picked today... the local variety of kiwi fruit, then I add some honey. It becomes a great looking pure white sauce.

I quickly pour that sauce. The white sauce on top of a light brown cutlet is such a sight.

“It’s finished. Deer cutlet with walnut sauce.”

It’s a special cuisine of savoriness of venison with walnut oil and walnut paste on the side, poured with a special rich-flavored sweet and sour sauce.

“Whoa... It looks delicious. Let’s eat it soon!”

“I know, right? And is my request of boiling the bulbils done yet?”

“It’s done when Kurt-sama went and took the venison!”

“Great job! Now, let’s eat.”

“Yes!”

Like that, we go to the dining table.



“For the food we obtain today, we thank the forest and God.”

After we pray as usual, we start digging in. In the dining table, there are my handmade cutlet and bulbils boiled with salt. Other than that, there’s beef jerky soup. The meal right now is more extravagant than usual.

“Then, let’s start eating.”

“Yes, eat them.”

The cutlet is already cut. Tina puts one cut into her mouth. A crunching sound comes from her. Tina’s eyes widened as she chews. Gulping down, there’s a loud sound coming from her throat.

“Whoa, this is the first time. I always thought that we never had enough oil for venison, but to produce the rich flavor to this extent is just...”

Tina is engrossed with the cutlet.

“That’s because venison and walnut match well.”

Lightly flavored meat really goes well with walnut. For example, if the walnut sauce is poured onto pork instead, the pork and walnut’s flavor will fight each other to a disastrous result.

The lightness of the deer is the exact reason why it can accept the astringency and richness from the walnut.

“Moreover, the sauce’s sourness keeps increasing later on.”

Hardy kiwi (*sarunashi*), the local variety of kiwi fruits, produce a slight sweetness, but an extraordinarily strong acidity. It’s not suitable to be eaten raw, but it is most suitable to add acidity. No matter how light the venison is, it’s still heavy when fried. That is refined by adding the acidity from hardy kiwis. It should play an active role in

tomorrow's pastry as well.

"It's wonderful how I can taste the walnut's flavor more than anything I've ever tasted before! It's the first time I've eaten walnuts this tasty."

"That's because it's the cooking that is most suitable to showcase the walnut's tastiness. The coating and the sauce, I made both to highlight the impressive quality of the walnut. So, I can take that you're satisfied with this, right?"

"Yes, if I can eat walnut cooking to this wonderful extent, I can endure not eating the treat by the end of spring!"

I'm glad that Tina seems happy. I'm joining and eat a piece of the cutlet. It's really good, if I can say so myself. On top of that, I take some boiled bulbils to my hand. It has the gentle flavor, exactly between potato and chestnut that goes really well with the deer cutlet. I naturally can't stop my chopsticks to keep going for them.

"Huff, thanks for the meal."

Tina has finished eating her portion in an instant. Her face looks really defenseless.

"I humbly thank you for the meal."

As I see Tina's happy face, I feel happy too. All of my heart's fatigue regarding tomorrow's match seems to disappear.

Following Tina, I also finish my part. It was a really great meal, if I do say so myself. Also, this cutlet (*katsuretsu*) isn't made just for today's treat that put out walnut flavor to its maximum. It's a lucky charm.

To win (*katsu*) against the enemy. Well, this is probably just wishful thinking, but it doesn't feel bad.

Afterwards, Tina and I slowly talk to each other, then I sleep while embracing her. This is the night before the decisive battle. It's not strange to feel anxious in this kind of situation. Even so, thanks to Tina, I'm able to sleep soundly. There's a warmth in my chest; it becomes my strength.

Chapter 19

The Selection Ceremony

I set out from the village early in the morning. This time, I'm bringing a lot of ingredients and a lot of people, so I use a horse cart. There will be around ten people attending the festival after the selection ceremony, so we all ride the horse cart together.

As we exit to the main road, there are villagers gathering around the end of the main road ahead. There are a lot of people, seems like almost the whole village is there. Just what could possibly have happened? While thinking that way, I cross over with the carriage. In that moment...

"Young Master, you must win!"

"Kurt-sama, you definitely can't lose!"

"If it's Kurt-sama, you're gonna win, I know it!"

"We're expecting some souvenirs, next family head!"

The words of encouragement are rapidly thrown in my direction. They become a powerful voice. Then, the feeling that rides upon those words, I can tell that this cheering come from the depth of their hearts.

"Thank you, everyone..."

I tear up a little bit. I'm so happy.

"Kurt-sama is loved."

"It seems so. They're such wonderful people who are almost wasted on me."

I fell in love with this village again. The cheering from the villagers kept going on until our horse cart is no longer within their sight.

Arriving at the main village, the villagers climb down, leaving Tina and I alone inside the carriage to go to the main village's warehouse. Since early in the morning, the horse carts from each village have already lined up there. For the sake of today's festival, they have prepared as many offerings as possible to put on airs.

In a sense, it appeals as to how powerful the assets of our villages are and how loyal we are to the main village. My father and his servants are promptly handling the row until it's my turn.

"Father, I've come with the offerings."

"Thank you for your effort."

Father inspects the deer meat that I brought. The corner of his lips slightly twitch upward.

"Hm, such a splendid deer. It's quite a treat."

"I was thinking that it should be enjoyed in today's festival."

I give a business-like greeting. If I show even a little bit of emotion here, seems like a lot of things will overflow. Since the business is taken care of, I retreat. I shouldn't overstay.

"Kurt!"

Father calls me to a halt. When I turn around, Father visibly hesitates for a moment before opening his mouth.

"After the selection ceremony, no matter if you win or lose, come to my room. There's something I want to talk about with you alone."

Father looks small. It's the first time I've ever seen him like this.

"I understand. Father, I won't fail to visit after the selection ceremony."

"Thank you, Kurt." Father murmurs apologetically.

I don't like seeing him like that, so I change the topic. "... I also have a request, if I may speak about it."

I almost forget an important matter. After I become the feudal lord, there is a crucial rite to make people understand where I will lead this territory to. It is important to have my father's approval to prepare it.

"What is it?"

"After the selection ceremony, no matter if I win or lose, please lend me the mansion's kitchen. I wish to make pastries as a treat in the festival."

When I said that, my father made a befuddled expression.

"Treating with pastries?"

"Yes. It's something more important to me than anything. Also, it will convey my thoughts to everyone better than a thousand words."

Father still looks puzzled, but he allows the usage of the kitchen. This is enough for now. He will understand my real intention at the festival.

The selection ceremony is held in the central square of the main village. Together with Tina, I arrive before it commences.

A dedicated ring has been erected. The ring is one level higher than the ground. A stadium for the audience has been prepared around it. The feudal lord candidates must wield the spear and prove that they are worthy of becoming the feudal lord under the watch of the people of the Arnold family.

There's still time, so no one else has come yet. There's only me and Tina.

"Kurt-sama."

Tina grabs my hand tightly. I didn't realize that she had been holding my hand. My hand is trembling.

"...How strange. I know that I won't lose, but I still feel nervous."

I have my Sword Ability III and the martial arts that will showcase that. It's actually harder for me to lose even if I wanted to. But, even so, I can't erase the anxiety in my heart.

I haven't won against Jörg even once. That experience casts fear in me. It's illogical.

Seeing me like this, Tina smiles. "Kurt-sama, can you squat down for a moment?"

"I don't mind."

When I squat down as Tina told me to, she wraps her arms around my head, burying me in her chest. Tina's warmth and softness and sweet fragrance. I can hear her heartbeat too.

"Whenever I really feel painful, or anxious, my mother will do this to me. When she does, I can calm down. Kurt-sama, how is it? Are you still scared?"

I close my eyes. Tina's very existence pleases my heart.

When I realized, I no longer feel anxious or tense.

"I feel fine now. Thank you. That wasn't like me at all, I'm really embarrassed."

Being comforted by Tina who is younger makes me feel miserable as a man.

"It's okay once in a while. I love Kurt-sama, including that side of you."

I'm grateful that I met Tina. I sincerely think so. Released from Tina's embrace, I stand up again. I'm no longer trembling.

The only thing left for me is to win.



After a short time, people are gathering. I see a familiar face among them.

"So you're in this place, I've been looking for you."

The one who greets me in friendly voice is Margrave Fernande. Behind him, his attendant is following him while holding a big wooden box.

“I apologize for making you seek me, Margrave Fernande.”

“Oh, it’s fine. I simply want to show this to you without wasting any second.”

Before the gaze of Margrave Fernande, there’s the wooden box that his follower was holding. That is, most likely...

“Could it be, that is what I requested?”

“Correct, that is your requested item.”

His follower approaches me and opens the wooden box. Inside it, there is straw which holds eggs. I take one of the eggs. Well-shaped, without any shortcomings in the size. This egg is good.

“They are amazing.”

“Because this is a reward for you who has shown me something wondrous. I’ve prepared the very best kind. I’ve arranged the chickens that lay these eggs to arrive here tomorrow morning. It would be troublesome to hand over today, wouldn’t it?”

“I really appreciate your thoughtfulness.”

I cannot go out of the main village today. It’s a great help to have them tomorrow. It’s a pleasant consideration.

“In exchange, I’m urging you to make a wonderful pastry. Both Faruno and I are looking forward to it.”

“Could it be that Faruno-sama came here as well?”

As the third daughter of Margrave Fernande, she came along to quench her curiosity of me at the inspection day. I didn’t think that she would go as far as coming to this selection ceremony as well.

“She did come, seeing that the result of today’s selection ceremony isn’t entirely unrelated to her.”

I listen to Margrave Fernande’s words, then tilt my head. Margrave Fernande only shows me a meaningful smile. In that moment, Father, my younger brother Jörg,

Faruno, and their attendants arrive. When Jörg's eyes meet mine, he looks away. Looks like he has an ugly awareness of me after that one incident.

On the other hand, Faruno runs up to us with sparkling eyes in an instant. "Aah, Father! It's cunning of you to speak to Kurt-sama first, even though I had departed in haste!"

"Hey, you shouldn't run. It's very unladylike. Look at Kurt-kun, he's so surprised that his eyes became round."

"Ah, that, uhm, I'm sorry. I'm usually more ladylike, though?" Drooping her head, Faruno murmurs shyly.

"No, I do not mind it in the slightest."

"I'm glad to hear that! Kurt-sama, you have to win in today's selection ceremony! I will cheer you on."

"Uh, yeah."

I feel perplexed because I have no idea why Faruno would be rooting for me. I can feel someone's prickling gaze. Jörg glares in this direction. Right now, I kinda pity him. Rooting for me means wishing for Jörg's defeat.

"Faruno, with our position, it's dangerous to root for either side. That could be taken as a Margrave's will. Even as a reward, giving the eggs in a public space is probably not enough prudence on my part." The margrave warns Faruno.

His words are reasonable. Faruno's current remark possesses quite a danger. In this place, there are leaders from other villages other than us. If they are to think that the margrave endorses me, it might get unpleasant.

"I'm really sorry, *otousama*." Faruno apologizes for the second time.

"Margrave Fernande, Faruno-sama, the only thing on my mind is to put forth my whole effort. Naturally, my younger brother Jörg is the same. The strongest, the most suitable candidate for the title will become the next feudal lord. As simple as that." I give a follow up for Faruno.

Margrave Fernande smiles thinly, noticing my intention.

“Just as you said, Kurt-kun. We do not intend to put the mouth for the succession of the Arnold baronetcy.” Albeit a little forced, Margrave Fernande declares strongly.

It should be fine now. Afterwards, we give the proper greetings and separate with each other.



Finally, the selection ceremony's time has come. Jörg and I face each other on the prepared stage.

“*Nii-san*, I can finally end you. What I'll do after becoming the feudal lord, look forward to it.”

The surrounding spectators begin cheering. Father is going to appear anytime now, announcing the beginning of the selection ceremony, starting the duel. This battle will decide everything. The one who will become the feudal lord will decide if I can protect everything I have, or if they all will be taken away from me.

“If that were to happen, do as you like. If you can, that is.” I laugh fearlessly.

I no longer feel anxious. Tina has given me courage. The rest is just to win this.

Chapter 20

Conclusion

Jörg and I, face each other in the fighting grounds.

Father has appeared for five minutes, he should signal the beginning of the selection ceremony soon. The audience is oddly excited, predicting the result of the battle. Most of them has no shred of doubt about Jörg's victory.

"Nii-san, I really hate you."

Jörg stares at me with eyes full of disdain. His words are drowned out by the noise from the audience, only conveyed to me.

"What a coincidence. I really hate you too."

Until now, we've only ever seen each other with severe displeasure. There's no way I could've liked him.

"I always, always envied you, Nii-san. Since you were small, you could do anything. You could memorize how to read and write letters in two months, while it took me three years. You could learn to do calculations in two days, I needed two years. Within a month, you could memorize the spear forms, while it took me half a year. It has always, always been like that. I could never do the things you could in a blink of an eye. 'If it were Kurt-sama'...everyone kept saying that, you know?"

It was a nostalgic talk. At that time, there was still some cuteness in this guy. The reason why I haven't killed this guy until now was probably because I still had the memories of those times.

"Nii-san, you were loved by everyone. Father, Mother, Eris, Anna, Robert, every single and each one of them only looked at you. There was not a single thing that I could win in against you... Until my spear talent awakened in me."

When we were little, I could even win against Jörg in spearmanship. It was likely that we were reversed due to the awakening of his spear talent.

“After I won against you in the spear, the world was overturned. It felt so good. Everyone came to love me. They didn’t look at you, Nii-san, but at me. However, Nii-san, everyone was still gossiping behind my back, you know? How worthless I am aside of my talent in the spear, how there’s no future if the Arnold family is in my hands... How they wished you would awaken your spear talent!! Nothing ever changed no matter how hard I tried!”

Jörg’s hatred turns into murderous intent. So that was the reason this guy dropped all his effort, huh?

“Right now, it’s like that too! The margrave, his daughter, they’re only engrossed in you! Even now, if I take just one step outside the Arnold house, someone like me is shit while everyone seeks for you! Just what do I have to do so that they see me and not you!?”

Jörg screams wildly like a child throwing a tantrum. It’s pathetic at this point.

“How should I know? Why do I have to answer someone I hate?”

“How cold, Nii-san. Also, hating me is a lie, isn’t it? Nii-san, the only time you ever properly felt something sincere at me was when I attacked that brat inside the stable. You never had any interest in me. For you, Nii-san, I’m nothing but an insect. You’ve only been driving me away when I got close. In the whole territory of the Arnold baronetcy, Nii-san, you’re the one who never notices me the most!”

He can say quite the strangest things. I’ve just decided to leave my younger brother alone as long as he didn’t inflict more harm.

“What, do you actually want me to care?”

“Maybe I do. I always chased after you, Nii-san. But that is over now. I will become you. If I can snatch everything you care about away, I can become you. I will get your village and your precious woman, and I’ll become you!” While saying those ridiculous things, Jörg’s eyes show that he’s serious.

I see, he doesn’t seem to be joking. He actually told me all of that fantasy-like speech earnestly.

“Jörg, you are you. Even if you take everything from me, you can’t become me.”

Jörg's face twitches.

Then, I continue my words, "Moreover, I won't let them be taken away. I will no longer lose against you. I won't be defeated."

I take a fighting stance with my naginata... with Ginsen. When I do so, I can feel Tina's warmth. In short, my current self is invincible.

"You're acting strong, in the spear! But, the spear is the only thing I won't lose against you, Nii-san! Even though you won't lose if you use mana you won't break the rules!"

Jörg also takes a stance with his spear.

"And to begin with, what's that weird spear, Nii-san? Is that the source of your confidence? If that's so, it's futile. That kind of petty trick won't make you win!"

"You'll understand once the fight starts."



「無駄だね、
そんな小細工じゃ
勝てないよ！」



「俺はもう
おまえに負けない。
負けてやらない」

I don't need to explain further. It will be conveyed in the middle of the fight.

Then, Father appears between me and Jörg who are glaring against each other. He opens his mouth.

"The selection ceremony shall begin soon," he announces powerfully.

The spectators who have been making a ruckus until just now go silent.

"The first head of the Arnold family piled heaps of deeds with nothing but his spear and attained his court rank. With a single spear, he made monsters and mana-wielding soldiers from enemy countries yield before him. Even after attaining his court rank, he continued protecting the people and defeating his enemies. Therefore, the head of the Arnold family has to be the most excellent one in martial arts."

I've listened to this tale so many times. I'm so fed up with it that my ears turned red like boiled octopus. For the Arnold family, excelling in martial arts without using mana is the thing they boast about. That's why they have this tendency to be prejudiced against mana. I can feel their aesthetics; they do not rely on it.

Just like how the First did it, you have to continue the practice in the future too.

For me, that kind of thing sounds utterly laughable. It's better to use all of the power that you have.

"In this place, it will be settled with nothing but their self-trained bodies and their weapons! You will lose if you are unconscious or surrender. Otherwise, in the case where I judge that one of you gets a life-endangering injury, I will announce his defeat."

Those are the rules. This time, both my naginata and Jörg's spear will not be wrapped in the fabrics that will seal their lethal properties.

"Now, Kurt, Jörg. Are you both ready?"

"I am well prepared."

"I'm good too, *Tou-san*."

Father nods, then raises up his hand.

“Then, let the selection ceremony begin!”

Then he swings his arm down.



The duel of the selection ceremony has now begun. I decided to make the first move.

Jörg's stance has a gap somewhere. He's conceited, thinking that he can follow my movements just from looking.

Rather than dealing his hands in order to win, it seems like Jörg has the characteristic to greatly humiliate me. That's why, in the previous matches, he had nothing planned; even his posture was a mess.

Both of us were taught in the basics by our father. It's a given that Jörg has the bare minimum of a correct stance.

If I attack that gap, the winner and loser will be decided in an instant.

I step into my full power. The martial arts that I trained for ten years is accelerated with Sword Ability III.

This is just one simple thrust. The starting point of my spear. It's exactly why this is the best blow that will decide everything. With this, I can wield my full power without abusing Sword Ability III.

Ginsen travels with the speed that surpasses the wind-cutting sound.

“Jörg, be serious. I'm showing you my real ability.”

The blade of my naginata... of Ginsen, rips a wound in Jörg's cheek. His blood softly flows.

Jörg cannot respond in the slightest. I ended it just by hitting him in one blow. I return to my stance after swinging my spear back.

“Wh-what was that, y-you disappeared just now, h-huh, what's with t-that speed.” Jörg looks confused.

To his knowledge, my movements still belong to a mere human. Without spear talent, I can't surpass the limit of an ordinary man. And yet, he's now confused because I let him see a thrust that reaches the divine realm.

"I'll say this one more time. Get serious. This is my real ability. I missed deliberately, but I won't do it again," I declare while thrusting Ginsen.

Jörg takes a step back.

There's a reason why I deliberately missed, I won't allow Jörg to have any excuses later. If I beat him with the previous blow, this guy will cry that he was caught off guard, that I hid my true power before the actual match, and that his defeat was because he had no chance to show his true power as well.

I won't forgive that. He will lose with his real ability, without fail. I won't ever let him think that he didn't win because he couldn't fight with his full power.

"No way, Nii-san, your speed, y-you... you broke the rules! You must have used your mana. It's weird! Right? Tou-san!"

Jörg turns to our father, blaming me for breaking the rules.

"No, Kurt hasn't used mana." Father shakes his head and denies it. He can use mana a little bit too, so he can tell if I use it or not.

As long as Father says that, Jörg has no choice but to believe it. His face turns pale.

"Jörg, you can just surrender. Your abilities are inferior to me, with your speed and weight lacking do you think you can still win?"

"That was just a fluke. Obviously, just a fluke. Moreover, until now, I haven't been serious at all. You'll regret that you didn't beat me with that blow."

Jörg's veins popped, and he clutched his spear forcefully. It's the first time he ever made a proper-ish posture. But still, it's a poor one. Indeed, he hasn't been serious at all until now, but that negligence has only made his spear blunt.

"Yes, come at me with your full power. I will make you yield."

This time, both Jörg and I run at the same time. I purposely respond to Jörg's thrust.

His spear clashes with Ginsen, then flipped.

I estimate the time when Jörg's posture's balance is thrown off, then I grip Ginsen and leave the center of the gravity to the front. In short, I promptly seized the next action.

I step into his territory forcefully. It would be good to ride on the momentum of stepping in, but that might kill him.

Originally, if he enters the interval of his spear, he can mow down or kick away, but Jörg's ability isn't high enough to do either. Jörg only becomes flustered, exposing his gaps awkwardly. I turn Ginsen upside down, then with the same posture, I strike Jörg's torso with the blunt end. It's a direct hit with a dull sensation.

"Gah!"

Jörg falls to his knees, then vomits. It's a clean hit to his vital spot. It must be painful.

I distance myself without giving the finishing blow. It's Jörg, after all, he has no will power whatsoever. He should give up with this.

"B-brother, not yet. It's not over yet." Jörg props himself up to his feet with his spear, glaring with a pale face.

"You still want to do it? The discrepancy between our full powers is as clear as day."

"Shut up!"

Staggering, Jörg holds his spear while throwing himself at me. I lightly avoid it and make him miss, then hit the back of his neck with the back edge of the naginata's blade. Because it's a katana, the back of the blade is just a blunt weapon.

Jörg pitches forward to fall. This should finally be the end, right? And yet...

"N-nii-san, where are you, going?"

With a severe attack to his neck, I thought his consciousness would definitely grow dim, but Jörg gets back to his feet.

I was sincerely surprised. He shows will power to this extent.

“You can barely stand, right? Just surrender.”

“As if I’d lose! As if!”

He sends out his spear weakly again and again, but that kind of attack will never reach me. However, Jörg still continues to wield his spear.

“For me, for me, there’s nothing but the spear. If I lose even in the spear, I, I—!!”

Jörg grits his teeth, still swinging his spear. He grits too strongly that his back teeth start to crack.

Right now, Jörg is more serious than he’s ever been before. It’s the first time I realized I’ve been underestimating him. I’ve been thinking that he would give up after being shaken off adequately.

“Jörg, sorry. I’ve been looking down on you.”

Jörg’s thrust is repelled by Ginsen from below, turning his body into a *banzai* posture. Then, I brandish my naginata upwards... This isn’t a posture of wielding a spear.

“You cannot be stopped by a half-hearted blow... so I’ll be serious too.”

Then I swing downwards. Ginsen flashes in silver color like his namesake, making a big diagonal slash on Jörg, like a monk’s robe. Blood splashes around.

“B-brother. I, I always, towards you—”

While the rain of blood falls, Jörg tumbles down with vacant eyes.

“Winner, Kurt!”

Father announces the winner, while a flustered doctor comes running to Jörg’s side. The wound isn’t as deep as it looks, if he can stop the blood in time, he can save Jörg’s life.

When I look into the spectator’s area, a great half is rejoiced by my victory, while those who have been tailing Jörg until now become really pale. I turn around.

“Kurt, go to my room ahead of me. I will follow you soon after checking Jörg’s

condition.”

“Yes, *Chichi-ue*.”

I bow towards my father and exit the stage. As I step down from the stage, Tina has been lying in wait for me.

“Kurt-samaaa!”

Tears are welling up in her eyes as she jumps at me. I welcome her into my arms. Tina wraps her arms around my back strongly.

“Kurt-sama! I’m glad. I’m so, so glad that you won!”

With a tearful voice, Tina tells me how glad she is, over and over again. She’s surprisingly worried over me.

This girl was surely anxious from the bottom of her heart. I’ve spent this one week only by cutting cabbages and awakening my earth magic arte. Moreover, she must have been anxious because she has been beside me all this time, looking at me being repeatedly beaten by Jörg.

“Yes, I won. It’s thanks to Tina. Because you were here, I could win. With this, we can live our lives in that village from now on.”

“Yes, yes!”

Until Tina stops crying, I pat her back and let her do as she wishes.



Margrave Fernande and Faruno arrive. With a bitter laugh, Margrave Fernande gestures with his eyes and hand that he will wait for me, while Faruno looks at me and Tina with a displeased look.

Chapter 21

A Father's Feelings and A Son's Feelings

After holding me tightly, Tina stops crying and removes herself.

"Kurt-sama, I apologize for not behaving properly," Tina said in a tearful voice while covering her embarrassed face.

"No, it's alright. Knowing that you care that much makes me happy."

Tina looks all the more bashful. I nonchalantly rub her head, then face in the margrave's direction.

Tina hides herself behind my back. She's not really good with strangers, and she wouldn't want to show her tear-stained face to people she doesn't know.

"I've kept you waiting, Margrave Fernande." I bow my head down.

Margrave Fernande is an accomplished person. Logically speaking, an ordinary noble would be mad to see a servant pulling and cutting him off from a conversation.

"Ah no, it is all right. I also feel depressed to see tears in a lovely maiden's face," comes the reply from Margrave Fernande, who shows a friendly smile. Tina, who hides behind me, becomes less wary and shows her face.

"Nevertheless, congratulations. Well, I was surprised that you actually won. Have you actually surpassed Sir Arnold's level?"

"No, I haven't reached my father's spear yet."

Both Father and I have reached Level III of our own Abilities. The rest is decided by our pure skills. On at a glance, I have a higher skill than my father, but that's due to the naginata's superiority and whether or not I can live up to it. I recognize that much.

"It's good to be humble. I heard that you could use mana, and you're already this strong without it. I wonder, just how much stronger will you be if you used both at the same

time? It's terrifying. Don't you think that you could advance on the path of power?"

Indeed, if I use mana, it wouldn't have come to this battle. Father may be able to use a little bit of mana, but that's merely a breadth of it like any common person. Joining the power of mana to the strength that comes from using an Ability will grant me a power that far surpasses anything anyone has ever known before. Ability and mana, a person who displays both is indeed very rare.

"Even so, my dream is to become the world's best pastry chef. I will show you how much I can accomplish on this path."

"I'm looking forward to it. Now there's another thing to discuss, but... Ah, we'll leave it for later."

Margrave Fernande looks at Faruno's direction with meaningful eyes. Faruno also looks back with meaningful eyes, covering her giggling mouth.

"Kurt-sama, please accept my warmest congratulations. It was a beautiful display of skill. Even in my fief, there's no one more skillful than Kurt-sama."

"Thanks."

"The truth is, I was thoroughly charmed. Your knowledge, your sweets, your martial arts, Kurt-sama is a sinful person who's stolen my heart."

"That is my honor. For my humble self to receive such words from a beautiful young lady like you, I feel like soaring high."

Somehow, I feel discomfort from my back.

Tina puffs her cheeks, crumpling my shirttail. Her jealous expression is cute. My words earlier were just flattery though.

"Margrave Fernande, Faruno-sama. In the upcoming festival this evening, I will present to you my treasured sweets, baked using the eggs I gratefully accepted from Margrave Fernande. Please, look forward to it."

"You don't need to say anything, I've been looking forward to it."

"It's the same for me. Kurt-sama! I've come today in order to eat your sweets!"

It seems that they're expecting it more than I thought. I feel more pressure now.

"But, what on earth will you be making?"

"I will treat you to some golden-colored sweets. It will live up 100% to the eggs' deliciousness."

"Ohh, I can't wait." Marquis Fernandes' eyes narrow to a smile.

"Well then, I need to greet my father properly, then prepare the food. Please excuse me for leaving early."

I need to prepare the sweets for 200 people in just 2 hours. I must hurry.

"Forgive us for holding you back. Please do what you must."

"Kurt-sama, let's talk again later."

I bow to Margrave Fernande and Faruno, then go away from that place.



When I walk into Father's office, he's already inside. Somehow, this scene overlaps with the talk I had once with Margrave Fernande.

"Chichi-ue, my apologies for being late."

"No, it's fine. You've done well."

Father looks exhausted for some reason.

"First, let me apologize to you. I'm sorry for all you've gone through until now. I've treated you horribly... I had every intention to chase you away from this territory."

Without making excuses, Father apologizes right in front of me.

"I've actually heard about your intention when I spoke with Margrave Fernande back then. It allowed me to sort my thoughts. There's no need to apologize."

Father listens to my words, then opens his eyes in astonishment. *Is that so...* he

murmurs in small voice.

“There were better things compared to wasting your lifetime in a place as small as the Arnold family... no, even compared to succeeding this fiefdom, I thought I would let you accomplish big things by going to Margrave Fernande’s place. I believed that you had that ability.”

Bitterness spreads in his voice.

“On the other hand, there’s your younger brother Jörg. He might not be able to live if it’s not here. He has his own ability, but it crumbles in front of you. Moreover, his character strays even further away. No, it’s probably the result of how we reared him. Still, as long as he’s near you, problems will arise.”

Father shows his anguish and remorse with those words.

“I wasn’t able to do right in guiding him... But even so, if you’re not here, I believed that I could start over from the first step, protecting this current Arnold baronetcy, and let it be the inheritance for the future generation.”

“Chichi-ue, are you saying that you wished for Jörg’s happiness and mine, all by yourself?”

“Yes, I wish for you to accomplish the huge things out there, and for Jörg to be steady, protecting this territory.”

After spilling those words, Father keeps being silent.

I understand his feelings. He loved us in his own way. He must have thought that there was no other way to let us both achieve happiness unless he did something like this.

“Chichi-ue, let me express one thing. The things you’ve done came from arrogance. You weren’t thinking about our feelings, pushing things just from your side. If you truly thought that way, I wish you had discussed things with us. If you did so, I would be able to lend you some knowledge, no matter how poor that was.”

I’m happy that you wished for our happiness, but I wished that you would’ve conveyed those feelings as well. If you did, I would be able to lend my hand before Jörg became this twisted.

“As for me, I haven’t been looking at Jörg, none whatsoever. He told me to that extent, that his big brother had no interest in him at all. And I admit that he was right. For me, Jörg was an existence that I couldn’t care about. I was his big brother, but I didn’t love him.”

If only I had connected with him more often, he probably wouldn’t have turned out like this. This matter makes me feel guilty. If I compare him to all the knowledge and experience I’m carrying from my previous world, I can’t help it.

And his Spear Ability made him even more unhappy. There’s no reward for working hard. Without working hard, he’s growing as a spoiled boy. It’s not strange for him to be twisted from experiencing both at the same time.

That’s why, I come to think that I want to help him, a little.

“About Jörg, that’s already done and over with. He should know about the real world. He should be able to realize how trivial the things he’s worrying about are right now if he goes out. Let’s make a request to Margrave Fernande. It’s okay if he’s not welcomed with hospitality; more hardships will be good for him. On top of that, I think it will be good if he can decide on his own, if he can find the place he belongs out there, or to return here.”

As long as Jörg stays here, he won’t change. If he comes to know the world out there, he will mature. It’ll be better if he can figure things out by himself after that.

“That’s impossible... I can’t possibly request of anyone to take care of someone that useless...”

“No, it’s possible. I’m holding a favor from Margrave Fernande. I’m going to use that favor for this.”

The promise to make sweets for the Duchess. It’s fine to use that favor for Jörg’s sake. That will be my first and last piety for the younger brother I’ve neglected.

“Kurt, forgive me. And, thank you.” Father bows his head.

It’s the first time I see him look so small.

“Chichi-ue, will you go out to the festival?”

“I don’t feel like it.”

“Please do forgive me, but, would you please go out no matter what? I’m going to treat everyone with a piece of pastry there. That pastry will paint the future of Arnold fief from now on.”

With those last words, I go out from that room.

The kitchen is my destination.

I can’t afford some half-assed pastries. I must make the fief people see my dream, and as soon as it’s completed, there’s a possibility that Margrave Fernande will cancel the order to send my pastry to the Duchess.

And yet, I don’t feel anxious at all.

It’s quite the opposite; I feel fired up.

From now on, this is my battle as a pâtissier.

Chapter 22

Madeleine Arnold

In the kitchen, there are ingredients lined up in a cramped place. They're probably the food offerings sent earlier this morning from each village.

The food supply for the festival are mostly done and gradually being sent out to the main village's central plaza. The hearth and the kitchen surface are empty. It seems like I could put out my skills as I like.

"Kurt-sama, we brought you the ingredients!"

Tina and the villagers come inside with huge baggage. In their arms, there are wheat flour, yams, bottles of honey, walnut oil, then green fruits that comes in 5-cm sizes, the local variety of kiwi fruit, *sarunashi*. On top of those, they also carry a huge, cloth-wrapped tray.

"Thank you, everyone. You're a huge help. Can I ask everyone to leave but Tina? I want you to help me with baking the pastries."

"Can I?!" Showing a fully blooming smile, Tina clenches her fist.

Until now, she's been helping me with everything but the pastry making. However, from now on, I'm aiming to make the best pastry with her. It's only her fire magic arte for now, but I plan to teach her a lot of things, little by little.

"I said you could. Rather, I hope you will."

"Yes, Kurt-sama!" Tina answers in high spirits.

The bunch of people around us grin broadly, looking at us with warm eyes.

"Young Master, we're going to the plaza ahead of you. If we stay here, we'll be getting heartburn even before tasting the sweets."

As Tina hears the joke, she blushes and puffs her cheeks.

“Even if my sweets give you guys heartburn, it will still taste really good, you know? Let’s meet up later.”

I send them off. Then, Tina stands besides me.

“I’ll help Kurt-sama in making the pastry as best as I can!”

“I’m relying on you. Tina’s power is indispensable.”

My mind gets reminded of the convenience of Tina’s fire magic arte in an instant. I can no longer go back to adjusting the fire with wood anymore.

“My power is indispensable...”

“Tina is my best partner. Please lend me your power.”

“I’ll work hard! For Kurt-sama’s sake, I’ll do anything!... Partner, best partner...”

From earlier on, Tina’s tail has been shaking to a buzz. It seems that the fighting yell gives her that effect. Now then, let’s start baking.

First, I steadily sift the flour portion that I’ll use, then grind the yams to scraps.

I borrow two bowls which are lying around in the kitchen. And then, I separate the egg white from the yolk. One bowl holds all the egg whites on one side, while the other bowl holds all the yolks on the other side. The yolks are quickly piling up, while the egg whites are clear transparent. These are good eggs.

“Uwaa, Kurt-sama, you crack the egg with one hand and only need one second to cleanly separate them. It’s just like magic!”

“It comes with practice. If Tina practices a lot, you can reach this point too.”

Most likely, my Cooking Ability III also factors in, though. My body follows the image of my movement in previous world. Thanks to that ability, I can reproduce those movements.

The weapon’s ability only tampers with pure speed and heaviness, but the cooking ability affects my sensitiveness that correlates with preciseness. Just like that, I finish separating all the eggs that Margrave Fernande brought for me.

“Now, shall we begin?”

I grab the bowl of egg whites, then put my homemade whisk inside and stir.

I’m making meringue. Incorporating air into the egg whites until white stiff foam is forming. The more I whisk, the more lumps of white meringue are formed.

“Uwaaaaaa, the egg whites became that big. It’s just like magic.” Tina’s eyes are sparkling brightly with excitement.

After that, I add honey in small amounts at a time. Not all at once. The trick is to add the honey little by little.

“Yosh, it’s a flawless meringue.”

I pull the whisk away as it’s peaking. Steady and firm, yet fluffy looking meringue is done. This is the foundation. If I fail here, I have nothing left to show to the public.

“Amazing, just from those eggs, it becomes this big and white and stiff.”

“That’s because there’s a lot of air inside. If we mix this into our batter, it will turn out to be really fluffy.”

If I bake the dough in the common way, it’ll properly become firm. However, by adding the meringue, the batter will be full of air and becomes fluffy.

“Now let’s move to the next step.”

I mix in the egg yolks I’ve separated earlier with 2/3 ratio to the meringue. With this ratio, I can reach the balance in this recipe. The remaining 1/3 of the yolks will be used later.

As I mix the egg yolks in, the meringue is stained with a yellow color.

Then, I add in the wheat flour that I’ve sifted earlier, as well as the ground yams. The fluffy batter that’s full of air can easily dry out. By mixing the yams, the mouthfeel taste will overall improve and the batter will ooze out a natural sweetness.

Lastly, the walnut oil.

I add in the amount of oil that makes up the lacking amount of egg yolks. With this, the yam's taste will become more harmonious and gentle. This can only be tolerated by using the walnut oil. If the recipe uses butter, it will be cloying and inedible. The refreshing aftertaste and richness from the walnut oil allows for a larger amount of it being added.

Next, by properly mixing them all up, the batter is done. It's not even baked yet, but the sweet fragrance already seeps into the air.

"Yellow, fluffy, and glistening, it looks delicious already."



“Well, it’s not like it can’t be eaten this way, but it’s more delicious after being baked, you know?”

With a wry smile, I take the cloth-wrapped tray. This was produced by magic arte. There are already ellipse-shape carvings lined up on the slate. I smear it with walnut oil.

“There’s something carved on the ellipses. This is...”

“You’ve noticed. It’s the Arnold family’s crest.”

One by one, I fill the cavity with the running batter I’ve prepared. This way, I can bake a lot in one batch.

The baking time should be around twenty minutes. If I bake five times, I can make 200 portions for everyone. Somehow, I manage to be on time for 200 people’s portions in just two hours. What I’m making is Meringue • Madeleine.

After I fill every cavity with batter, I put the tray into the furnace.

“Tina, the fire please. Make it strong.”

“Yes, Kurt-sama.”

“Please make the fire temperature go down a little... yes, a little more. Yes, right there. Please maintain this heat. Can you manage that?”

“Absolutely, Kurt-sama.”

With sweat running down, Tina bakes the madeleine. When the time comes, from the best eggs, using the forest’s wonderful ingredients like walnut and yams, there will be the spongy, moist madeleine. However, this is still incomplete. I won’t let today’s special pastry to end up just being a madeleine.

Just now, for a total of five times, we baked madeleine enough for 200 people’s portion. Right now, I’m going to raise the madeleine up to another whole new level.

“Kurt-sama, this already smells so sweet and wonderful, I can’t stand it. Just one, just

one, please let me eat just one!”

Tina looks at the light brown color of baked madeleine with vacant eyes. The deluxe madeleine made with walnut oil and yams will indeed be delicious enough like this.

“That’s right, Tina has worked really hard, so it’s okay to have a taste. But this is still not completed. The finishing touch starts now.”

“So it will become even more delicious than this?!”

“It’s the real thing now. Look, the baked madeleines have the Arnold family crest, don’t they?”

“Yes, the Arnold family crest is prettily carved there.”

“But don’t you think that the family crest is too dented? After I fill that part up, my pastry will be completed.”

I carved that shape while thinking to incorporate the family crest. However, when I think about the appearance, it’s quenching.

I have a reason not to do that. I still have 1/3 egg yolks that I left out before. Adding walnut oil into the yolks, then small doses of salt, after that the hardy kiwi fruit juice, I mix them all together while adding in the honey.

I’m making sweet yolk sauce. In French fine cuisine, this is one of the five mother sauces, Hollandaise. I’m modifying that to use in the pastry.

As expected, the umami of the eggs are concentrated in the yolks. More than scrambled eggs, the runny yolk of the sunny side up egg has a stronger taste. I’m making the sauce that will properly enliven the richness of the eggs.

The one single thing that enlivens the egg’s rich flavor is actually...

“Tina, please warm this sauce. Slowly, just like before.”

“I’ll be careful.”

Tina’s hands warms the egg sauce. The egg yolk’s deliciousness when eaten comes from, first and foremost, the temperature.

The egg's flavor is most developed at 60 degrees, on the verge of getting solidified. It's the so-called coddled egg. The egg sauce turns into a beautiful golden color.

There's also custard cream if I just want to enliven the egg's flavor, but, in this way, the rich flavor of the egg will be stronger.

I give Tina a sign with my eyes to stop warming them. I pour the coddled egg yolk sauce into the cavity of the madeleines at the perfect temperature. Yes, the sauce is made for the sole purpose to fill the carved family crest. The madeleine is showing the golden colored crest of the Arnold family.

Now this is completed. The yellow madeleine.

"Woooooooooow, so pretty. A pastry with a golden-colored family crest. How romantic."

Tina's eyes are sparkling while staring at the pastry. The pastry's appearance is as important as the taste. Especially as a treat in a festival like today. The madeleines adorned with the golden family crest will be perfect for the occasion, won't it?

"Now, try it. This is the best pastry that I can make right now. It's an original recipe based on a pastry called madeleine. Therefore, the name of this pastry is Madeleine Arnold. I've decided."

"A pastry that bears the name of Arnold... how wonderful!"

It's a pastry that pulls out 100% of the egg's flavor, made from the village, that enlivens the ingredients from the forest's blessings. That is the reason why the Arnold's name is a perfect fit. It can only be made in this fief. A deluxe madeleine.

「クルト様、
さっそく頂いて
よろしいですか？」

「ぜひ、食べてくれ」



“Now then, Kurt-sama, may I taste it now?”

“Absolutely, please enjoy it.”

“Then, thank you for the food.”

Tina bites into the Madeleine Arnold she’s been holding and closes her mouth.

Chapter 23

The Festival

Bringing the completed pastries, Tina and I go from the mansion's kitchen to the festival's location, the plaza. The madeleines are gathered into picnic baskets, while the egg yolk Hollandaise sauce is also brought along, inside an earthenware pot.

The two of us aren't enough to bring everything, so the mansion's servants are helping us with the rest of them. We didn't specifically ask for their help, but the servants seemed to understand that there were things they could help with.

Until now, they thought that my younger brother would succeed the family and didn't give much attention to me, thus suddenly receiving their courtesy like this feels unsettling. Because I became the head of the Arnold family, they must have hurried to sell some flattery. Though I have some mixed feelings about this, they're not to blame. They only want to protect their livelihoods.

When we arrive at the plaza, the festival is on the brink of starting. We barely made it, but somehow, we managed to make pastries enough for 200 people.

In the plaza that became the festival venue, there are tables lined up, filled with feasts. The Arnold fief is a poor territory, but there are enough luxuries, worthy of celebrating the next generation head. Rarely experiencing luxuries, the villagers' eyes are sparkling with excitement.

"You're finally here, Kurt-kun. Is that the rumored pastry in that basket?"

In the plaza, the person who greets me before anyone else is Margrave Fernande. There are also Father and the margrave's daughter Faruno nearby.

I'm glad that Father can participate and looked calm. With this, I can properly give him my pastry and convey my feelings to him.

"Yes, I made this with my whole power. Since the eggs that Margrave Fernande gave to me were really splendid, I managed to complete something that exceeded my expectations."

“I’m looking forward to it.”

“I wish to hand these out at the end of the festival, so I hope you wouldn’t mind to hold on a little bit longer.”

Madeleine Arnold is a pastry that will change flavor due to the temperature.

For the end of the festival, I arrange the baskets in each table, so that they are eaten with the Hollandaise sauce that Tina warms up just before they reach the hands of the villagers.

“Well, Kurt-kun. There’s something important to discuss after the festival. Would you spare some time for that?”

“I understand. I’ll be seeing you there.”

Most likely, it’s a greeting as the next generation head. I must brace myself.

When my mind wanders like that, Father opens his mouth. “Margrave Fernande, please pardon my rudeness. The festival will begin any time now, please pardon me for leaving this place shortly to give some greetings. I will be taking Kurt with me, therefore, Logory will be the one taking our place to be your guide.”

“Yes, please do,” the margrave answers to Father’s request.

Logory is a serious man, Father’s right-hand man. He’s a servant who single-handedly undertakes the Arnold family’s accounting and a passionately devoted man. There should be no problem to let him take our role.

“Well then, Margrave. We will see you soon. Kurt, please come with me.”

Father bows his head down, then we remove ourselves from that location.

Father and I stepped onto the platform. Enlarging his voice at once, he deeply inhaled his breath then opened his mouth.

“Hear me, my beloved people. Right now, the festival to celebrate the next head of the Arnold family will soon commence.”

His voice sends the fief’s people into an uproar. Well, they seem to be at their limit

from devouring the festival's banquet.

"First of all, I wish to relay my words of gratitude. As a result of everyone pitching in from each village, we are going to have this grand banquet. Thank you. Today, eat up, drink up, make big noise to your heart's content."

The mansion's servants are bringing bottles of alcohol to each table. Smiles are blooming on the people's faces. In this fief, alcohol is a treasure. It can be said to be a tremendous splurge.

I've been thinking to concoct mead when the production of honey increases. At this point, it seems unlikely to get my hands on them, though.

When I see the servants coming with alcohol, my head tilts in confusion.

Strange. They didn't bring the relatively cheap ale, but rather wine made from grapes. I can't regard them as something that the Arnold family could provide.

The servants open the alcohol and poured them into the fief's people's cups, but just from the scent wafting in the air, I can tell that this is a first class quality even among wines. The villagers are all salivating from knowing this kind of first class alcohol for the first time.

"This alcohol is a congratulatory gift from Margrave Fernande. The other day, my son Kurt had provided various knowledge for the margrave, earning him chicken and eggs as his rewards. However, Kurt's knowledge seems to have been more splendid than expected. Therefore, the margrave's subordinate counseled that his previous rewards wouldn't be enough to compensate for their estimated profits and will hurt the margrave's dignity. In order to add to that balance, we received this beverage. Please, everyone, let us express our gratitude to Margrave Fernande, and to Kurt, for enabling us to enjoy this alcohol today."

As soon as they heard Father's words, the fief's people simultaneously looked in my direction, holding a multitude of reverence in their gazes. I feel my face blush from the surprise attack.

When I look in Margrave Fernande's direction, he has been looking at me with an all-knowing teasing smirk on his face. In order to catch me off guard, he hid this news when we met.

Just from one event, I could gain the people's sympathy. This should enable me to manage the people easier from hereafter. It's something to be grateful for, but to me it feels like someone has gotten the upper hand. I decided to return this favor and debt someday.

Without lingering in the excitement, Father continues speaking.

"As you all have come to know, in the selection ceremony, it is decided that the next family head is Kurt. Once Kurt becomes the family head, this fief will surely become prosperous. On top of the alcohol we're enjoying for this event, anyone who looks at the village that Kurt has been building for three years will understand. Perhaps there are those among you who have heard the rumors, but let me clear it up. Kurt's village will become the richest village in our fief from next year. I am certain that other villages will also benefit from that from now on."

The fief's people start to make noises. As I thought, for them, the most important thing is how to live their lives for another day. They probably wouldn't be able to think of how to move forward if it was just Father's words, but with the margrave's surprise, they have been led to think that I am a great character.

Everyone starts to imagine a bright future and chats excitedly with their fellow villagers. There's hope in there.

"With this, I am going to end my greetings. Kurt, please convey a word or two to greet the people and have a toast with them."

I receive my Father's request and take one step forward.

In order not to miss a single word from me, the fief's people are all hushed up.

"Being able to convey my words to everyone in this place, you all have my gratitude. I am Kurt Arnold, the man who will become the next feudal lord of the Arnold family."

After saying those words, it actually starts to feel like I'll really become the next family head.

"I wish to make this land prosperous. However, this is not something that I can show to you just with words. Today, I've made a small piece of pastry. It's a sweet pastry. With this pastry, I'm going to show you the future that I envision. I wish that by eating that bit of pastry, I will convey, to all of you, my resolution."

When they heard about the sweet pastry, the people showed the same reaction as the moment they heard about the wine: full of expectation. In this world where sugar is a precious commodity, sweet pastries have a charm that's almost too violent.

"For now, let's have a toast, everyone."

All the people raised their wine filled cups.

"Cheers!"

They toast with their cups and start the feast.

Chapter 24

Sweet Future within the Pastry

The banquet was exciting. There are a lot of treats and delicious alcohol. Moreover, everyone feels hopeful for a more prosperous life from now on. It'll be strange if it's anything less than exciting.

The entertainers play music with their hands, and the other people dance to match it with laughter on their faces. It's really a wonderful festival. I'm savoring this atmosphere with my whole body.

"Jeez, Kurt-sama, have you been paying attention?"

"Faruno-sama, I'm listening."

Faruno's voice calls back my consciousness.

Since the start of the festival, I have been captured by Margrave Fernande and Faruno. The main topics are the supplementary information for the document about the device I've been implementing in my territory, as well as the books I have translated before. Both are fairly complex topics, so I can't afford to answer absentmindedly. Since the both of them seem to be enjoying themselves here, I'm glad.

When Tina sees my empty cup, she pours the wine again. She has been conducting herself with full devotion for a while now.

Just with her by my side, I feel at ease. She's a great help. I continue the talk for a while, then turning my focus to the venue. Both the food and drink seem to have diminished already. If I want to start, now would be a good time.

"Margrave Fernande, Faruno-sama, I am treating everyone to the pastry in a few moments."

Margrave Fernande nods, while Faruno opens her mouth to speak.

"It is regretful that we have to halt our discussion. However, I'm looking forward to the

treat.”

“I intend to treat both of you personally. Therefore, if you don’t mind waiting, I’ll return soon.”

“Wow, wonderful. It’s a promise, then.”

“Yes.”

I rise up from my seat.

“Tina, let’s go.”

“Yes, let’s give Kurt-sama’s pastries to everyone!”

Thus, with Tina, I’m walking away to reach the table where we left the pastries.



There are baskets filled with madeleine and earthenware pots filled with Hollandaise sauce on top of the table.

“Tina, I’m counting on you.”

“I’ll slowly warm them up!”

With Tina’s power, the sauce pots are warmed up to 60°C to stimulate the best deliciousness from the eggs. It’s the long-awaited pastries; I want people to eat them in their most delicious state. I’ve already divided the Hollandaise sauce into a few numbers of small earthenware pots.

The servants are bringing the madeleine baskets and small sauce pots to each table. People have started making a fuss over what’s going on. After the servants open the baskets, a sweet smell immediately fills the air. People realize that inside the baskets, there are the sweet pastries that I made; their faces start to melt.

Tina and I are moving around too. This time, we’re going back to Margrave Fernande’s and Faruno’s place. I want to directly present the pastries to them, as the heir of the Arnold family.



"Hou, the ones distributed just now are your pastries, correct?"

When I return, Margrave Fernande calls out to me.

"Yes, they are my pastries. Would you allow me to present it to you?"

"Absolutely."

Tina opens up the basket, then I arrange the madeleines on a plate.

"Baked pastry, isn't it? It smells really nice, like the scent of a fragrant forest. It looks really pleasing to the eyes as well, with a vibrant light-brown color. Isn't that the crest of the Arnold family carved on it? That is a good presentation. Very befitting of a grand ending to a festival."

"It looks fluffy and delicious. I also agree with Father that it smells really nice. What is the source of this scent, I wonder?"

"The scent comes from honey and walnuts. By baking them, they turn into this wonderful smell."

They both inspect the madeleine with great interest.

"Also, my pastry isn't finished yet. Let me put the finishing touches for you."

I receive the earthenware pot from Tina, taking the task to scoop the Hollandaise sauce. The temperature is perfect. The moment that pot is open, the sweet and sour scent from hardy kiwi spreads in the air. It is a refreshing fragrance that smells different than the walnuts.

"Hou, so you're going to add the sauce."

"Yes, you are correct."

With that, I'm pouring the sauce into the crest symbol. The golden-colored crest of the Arnold family appears in the madeleine.

"Uwaa, it's a golden-colored pastry. It's so pretty! How wonderful."

“My, my, I’m surprised. So this is what you meant when you said golden-colored pastry. Beautiful. It’s the first time I’ve seen this kind of presentation. I almost have no heart to eat it up.”

The both of them raise their voices in admiration. Faruno, especially, can no longer hold back; her hand has already gripped her fork really hard.

“With this, it’s completed. This is the pastry that I created, and I named it Madeleine Arnold. By all means, please, enjoy it.”

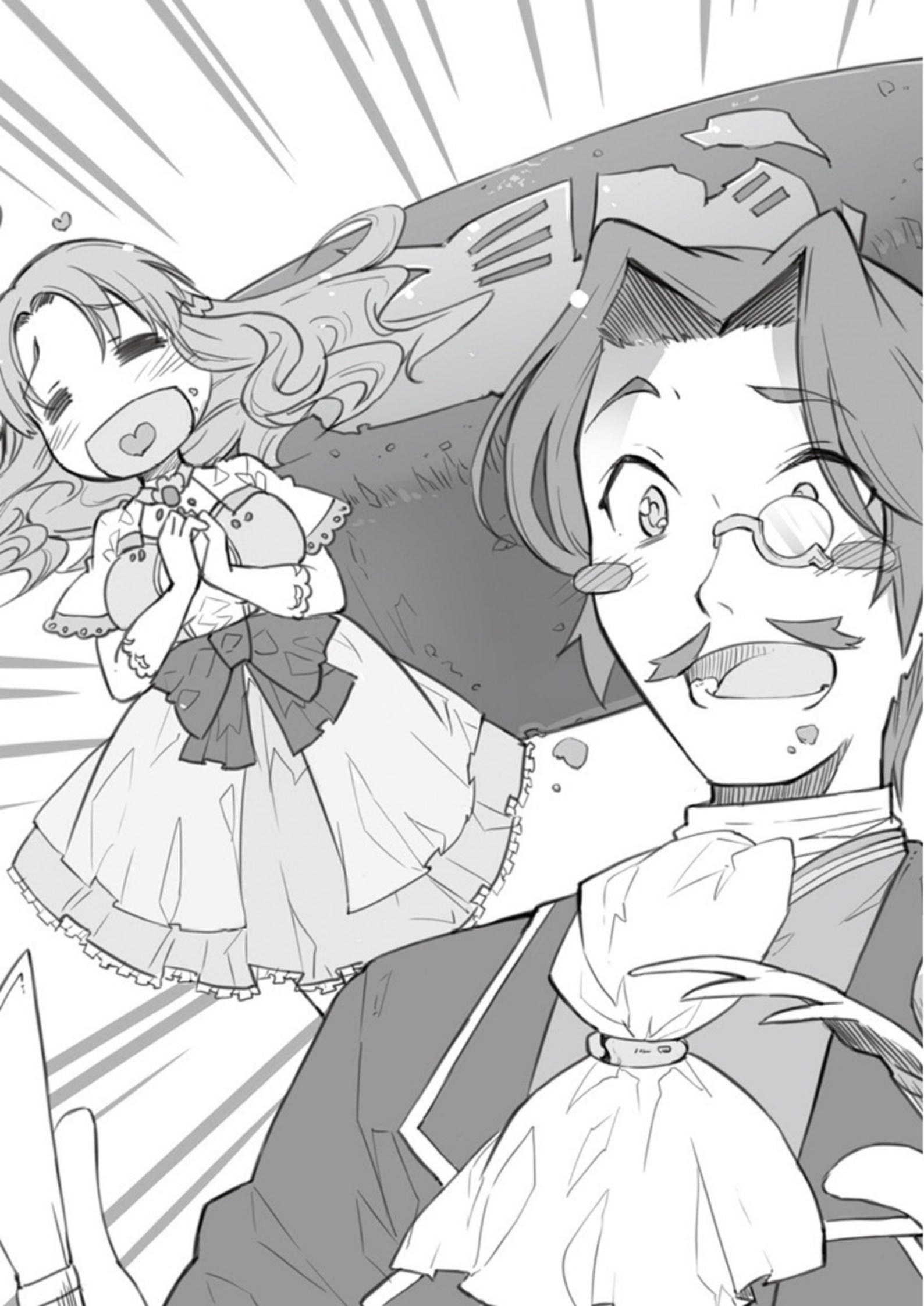
The surrounding servants who have been watching us are also pouring the warm sauce into the madeleines.

“Kurt-kun, you have attached the name of Arnold to the pastry, but do you have the resolution to smear mud in the family name if the taste isn’t as good as it looks?”

“Yes, I can say with certainty that this is the best pastry that my current self is able to make. It absolutely won’t let down the Arnold’s name.”

Without a shred of doubt, I answer clearly.

Margrave Fernande brings a spoonful of Madeleine Arnold to his mouth. The moment he starts chewing, his eyes opens wide.



“This is?! Such a rich egg flavor!”

Of course it would be. The sweetness of honey and acidity of fruits are added into the yolk-based sauce. Let alone that, if I only used the egg yolks, the 60°C of temperature stimulates the best deliciousness of the eggs. If it's compared to custard cream, the latter won't hold a candle in enjoying the rich taste of the egg.

“Father, it's not only the taste. The smoothness is also wonderful, it's so plump and fluffy, so moist. However, the place where it meets with the rich golden sauce, the texture changes into something even smoother. It's a dream-like pastry.”

The baked batter was expanded by folding meringue into it, which made the pastry fluffy, but on the other hand, made it easy to get too dry. However, adding yams and walnut oil maintains the batter's moisture. When it gets in touch with the velvety Hollandaise sauce, it creates a sensual texture. The texture of the part that touches the sauce and the part that doesn't are really different, which lets people to enjoy various sensations while eating it.

Also, the affinity of the flavors are excellent. Other than the eggs, all of the ingredients are grown right in the Arnold fief. It'll be stranger if they don't fit each other.

“I was already surprised by the cookies back then, but that one had a simple richness. This one, however, has a luxurious and gorgeous rich flavor. At this rate, there won't be a problem to have this on my dining table. It is a pastry for nobles. Moreover, it is very refined. My, my, it seems like I have still underestimated you. And you also made this with constraints in the ingredients and preparation time. You've done an excellent job.”

Margrave Fernande, while showering me with praises, can't stop his hand from taking the food into his mouth. It seems that he likes it that much. From the venue, I can also hear the voices of the fief's people.

“Sweeeeet! I can so die happily now.”

“Just by eating this pastry, I can sincerely feel that it's good that Kurt-sama is our next lord.”

“Aaah, I've finished mine already. The things I'll pay if I can eat it again...”

“It's too good to be true. This kind of food, how can we eat it again?”

“If Kurt-sama becomes our family head, we can probably eat it again in the future.”

“It’ll be good if that happens, I want to let my unborn son taste it too.”

I’m glad that it enjoys a huge popularity. Everyone indulges themselves to eat Madeleine Arnold. Meanwhile, Faruno, who has just finished hers, starts to speak.

“Kurt-sama, there is a heavy shortcoming of this pastry.”

She gives me a severe look. I become pale from her words. What kind of thing could I have overlooked? What kind of mistake could I have possibly done?

“Yes, a shortcoming... that is,”

She pauses to emphasize the importance.

“There are too few of them! We can’t have seconds!”

When I heard that, Margrave Fernande and I smiled wryly... Our eyes met and we both laughed louder.



After everyone finished their pastries, I step up on the stage once again. This is my closing speech. Also, this is the moment where I make them understand about my dream.

“Everyone, there are a few words I’d like to speak.”

The location falls into silence. Everyone is paying attention to me.

“Did you enjoy the pastry I made?”

When they heard my question, everyone responded one by one. I’m glad that there was nothing but rave reviews. It was as if they had enjoyed it to their heart’s content.

“I am glad to hear that. That pastry is called Madeleine Arnold. Just as the name says, it’s a pastry that expresses the future I want to create in this Arnold fief.”

Certainly, I didn’t use the Arnold’s name just for the elegance or being eccentric. I need

it to be an Arnold.

“My dream is to create a fief where all of you who live here may enjoy eating pastries as a common thing in your daily life.”

The fief’s people are all showing a shocked expression, their necks stiffen. For them, this is truly but a wishful tale of dreams.

“Everyone, you may not be able to imagine that kind of life. The Arnold fiefdom is poor, a lot of us are having it hard just to think if we have anything to eat tomorrow. Pastries are a dream within a dream. We can’t even get our hands on sweet things. Moreover, pastries are a noble’s food in the first place. Isn’t that what you’re thinking?”

The reality is harsh, but it’s true.

Pastries are luxurious goods of noble’s taste. That is the common sense of this world.

“But, you know, the ingredients for this Madeleine Arnold are all gathered from this territory. That kind of pastry, there’s no way we can’t enjoy them, is there?”

The fief’s people are muttering impossible one after another.

“Let’s go through the ingredients, shall we? Wheat... that’s already grown by everyone. Walnuts... if we go to the forest, we can pick up as many as we want. Yams... Even though they’re hard to dig, they are easy to find. Hardy kiwi fruit... It’s the green fruit growing all over the place. The eggs, I can send the chickens to each village once they have multiplied from what Margrave Fernande has given to us. And then, the sweetness is obtained from honey. The honey is something I have successfully harvested from the honey bees in my territory. With just a little bit longer, I can perfect the techniques and share them with other villages. In the near future, all of our families can enjoy honey. These are all the ingredients.”

As they listen to my words, they make a greater fuss. Finally, they have started to see that my dream is achievable in the future.

“Eggs and honey have to be postponed until next year, but everything else can be gathered even right now. Everyone, the future where we can make this pastry is right before us!”

For making this pastry today, I’ve been really fixated on using ingredients just from

this territory. For the sake of making them realize that my dream can come true, it's important to make the best pastry from common ingredients. Once I've cleared that step, it becomes the pastry that will make the fief's people believe in that dream. That's why the name is Madeleine Arnold. A pastry of a sweet dream. Their faces start showing enlightenment.

"I think you all have heard that my village is more prosperous than other villages. I have no intention to hide that honey. You see, for me, I will be trying each new invention in my village, and spread them to all of the other villages in the Arnold fief once it succeeds. By doing that, I'm sure we all can prosper!"

While we're still in the same fief, each of the villages are stubborn in their ways of doing things. I want to change that. In addition to the rumors of the success of my village and the recognizance of Margrave Fernande, the power of my pastry can surely become accepted by them now, right?

"And then, once we are not burdened by our daily meals, let's enjoy the pastries from the abundant ingredients, honey, and eggs. Pastries aren't just to be enjoyed by the nobles. It's something we can enjoy every day. I'll show you that I can make this Arnold fief into that kind of land."

That is exactly my duty as the feudal lord.

More than that, it is my dream as a pastry chef. Isn't it sad if there's only a limited number of people who can enjoy sweets? I want more people to know the happiness of eating pastries.

"My goal is [a land overflowing with sweets and smiles]. I want to make that dream come true, and if you have come to believe in me, please clap your hands. As the next Baronet of Arnold, with this I'm closing my speech."

I bow my head down. Saying any more words will just be boorish.

Can my dreams be accepted? The moment that thought came to my mind, I heard waves of noises. It was a huge round of applause. Every single person in this place clapped their hands with all of their strength.

Among them, there were Father, Margrave Fernande, Faruno... and there was Tina, too. Everyone believed in me.

I want to make this land prosper, along with these sweet and kind people.

I think of that from the bottom of my heart, and smile.

Epilogue

Engagement and the Future of Arnold

The festival ended without a hitch.

After my closing speech, the fief's people surrounded me as soon as I stepped down from the platform, bombarding me with one question after another.

The questions ranged from the concrete vision of our territory's management, the recipe for the pastry, to whether or not I plan to marry.

I intend to look closely at everyone's lives with my own eyes by visiting every village in turns soon. Leaving the cleaning up to the servants, I'm going back to the mansion together with Tina. There's still my promise to talk with Margrave Fernande after the festival, after all.

As I turn to the guest room, Margrave Fernande and Faruno, as well as Father, are already there, drinking tea. Tina stays behind me, standing with the other servants.

"Hello there, Kurt-kun. That was a wonderfully passionate speech. You've clearly conveyed your future vision to us. Oh, well, even before knowing in our heads, I think our stomachs have already understood anyway."

"Margrave Fernande, receiving your words makes me incredibly happy. I believed that, more than a thousand words, I could convey my thoughts better in that way."

"Indeed it was. Because, just by using the ingredients one can find in this territory, you could treat everyone with the pastries that even us nobles couldn't eat. There's no way we wouldn't believe in your words about making this fief into a land where you could enjoy sweets."

The margrave has already grasped my intentions firmly. As I thought, this man is amazing. When that thought dawned on me, Faruno starts to speak.

"Kurt-sama, this will probably turn into a longer talk. Please, have a seat. It's fine, right, Father?"

“Of course it’s fine. Take a seat, Kurt-kun.”

Since Margrave Fernande has nodded, I obey his words and take a seat. Meanwhile, black tea was served in front of me.

“Your succession as the next family head is a joyous occasion. However, what are you planning to do from now on?”

“I think it is important to discuss this with my father, but in the mean time, I wish to return to my village and act as my father’s assistant. As I have spoken before on the stage, I’m going to experiment with some new inventions in my village, then spread it to other villages if it works.”

It won’t be good if I suddenly tell all of the villages to implement a new method and it fails. Moreover, it’s more than just giving them some materials, we also need to consider an exchange of village personnel. We need to send people who have the skill drilled into them to other villages, and in exchange, there should be personnel from other villages who come to study the necessary skills for a year. By doing so, the efficiency rate should increase.

“For me, I only have now to start experimenting on new things. If I want to manage all of the villages at a large scale, now is the only time I have to experiment at my own my pace.”

“Yes, that’s good thinking. You still have to try out new things. At least, while Sir Arnold is still fit, you can do your experiments for the sake of connecting to a better future. Sir Arnold, what do you think?”

Being asked by Margrave Fernande, Father ponders only for a second before speaking.

“I agree with that plan. In order to make the Arnold fief wealthy, it’s more beneficial to let Kurt do whatever he wants, for now. I’d like to slowly teach him the duties of a feudal lord in the mean time.”

“Thank you very much. Margrave Fernande. Father, as well. I will show you that I can exceed your expectations.”

Being approved by the two of them means I can make my moves as I like. The rest relies on my own skills.

“Kurt-kun, do your best.” The margrave sends me his smile.

“Kurt, I have great expectations. Don’t spare any effort.” Father bluntly says so, but I can see more than hope in his eyes as he looks at me.

“Thank you very much.”

I sipped my tea. This should conclude the talk today, right? As that came to my mind, Margrave Fernande coughs once to clear his throat.

“In any case, this is a change of the topic, but I heard Kurt-kun had turned 15 now. You’ve already reached the age when marriage is no longer out of the question. I’m sure you knew as well that nobles are recommended to marry when we are 17.”

Nobles in this world marry early at the age of 15, while 17 is a suitable age. If they don’t marry in their teenage years, they will get cold looks.

I’m 15 now. Soon enough, I’ll come to the age where I must move forward. Yet, I absolutely have nothing to worry about in that department.

“That is indeed the case. Soon, I must stabilize my position.”

“Now, I have a proposal for that matter...” The margrave looks in Faruno’s direction. “How about marrying my daughter, Faruno?”

“Margrave’s daughter with me, the heir of this baronetcy?” Without thinking twice, I asked back.

I’ve predicted something like this, but this talk is *that* crazy. The social status of a margraviate and a baronet are vastly different. If we put that in the modern society’s perspective, they have the difference between a vice CEO and a field senior officer.

“That is correct. I wish for it to happen. If we only look at your present self, frankly, you cannot be compared to my daughter.”

I inwardly nod in agreement. The daughter of an aristocrat is a tool for political marriage, in order to create a secure bond with another household.

As the third daughter, just from the fact that Faruno is the margrave’s daughter, she has an immeasurable value. Even if the card is dealt wrongly, it’s impossible to use her

to forge a bond for a baronet and their family.

“You are a man who dreams big. I suggested this because it wasn’t a bad investment to recruit you early. Moreover, this girl has already responded positively.”

“Yes, I have already been charmed by Kurt-sama! I don’t know anyone who is as intelligent and energetic as you. Kurt-sama, would you please join in an engagement with me?” Faruno smiles bashfully.

There is no reason for me to refuse, if I’m only considering about my future development. Forging a blood tie with Margrave Fernande will have a huge impact. I can obtain various benefits, whether they’re tangible or intangible. However...

“Faruno-sama. Please forgive this humble self and allow this much of rudeness from me. I dare say that for you, the lifestyle in the Arnold fief will be unbearable. There is nothing here, even daily meals need frugality. I have spoken of a life where we can eat pastries in our daily life, but that requires two years or so to happen. In these past few days, you have received the best hospitality in the main village, but for the both of you, it might not feel so. However, it is impossible to provide this for a long time. The daily life here is even harsher, even more so in the settler’s village where I reside in. It’s especially bitter and agonizing.”

I’m telling them an official reason to refuse the engagement. However, Faruno didn’t seem to falter.

“I am prepared. But, you probably wouldn’t believe the words coming from a young lady who is ignorant in the ways of the world like me. If I am dragging your feet, Kurt-sama, it is fine for me to receive your hits inside the house. Father has also accepted it.”

“Just as Faruno said. Even if that happens, I won’t raze the Arnold baronetcy to the ground. The exception would be, if, by any chance, you lay your hands in anger before the marriage. I won’t forgive you if my daughter becomes damaged goods.”

The astonishment grows in me. I have no idea that her resolution reached to that extent.

“In any case, since there’s no misunderstanding between Father and Kurt-sama anymore, the engagement has been safely arranged. Please take care of me from now on, Kurt-sama.”



After that, she holds her hand out for a handshake with a blooming smile as pretty as a flower in her face. I grasp it and accidentally seal the deal.

Tina, being vigilant of Faruno, has her tail's fur rising up.

It seems that things will get complicated from now on.



I go outside alone with Faruno. She said that she wanted to talk just between the two of us.

"Faruno-sama, I'm—" I swallow the words in my throat back down. Those words are meant to turn her down. Yet, one feudal lord cannot refuse the engagement. I'm not the only one who will bear the burden, even the fief's people will.

"I understand, Kurt-sama." Faruno looks at me as if she has understood everything. "Kurt-sama, you think of that servant girl as more than just a servant. It was impossible to refuse your engagement with me due to your position, but you actually wanted to be united with her. Isn't that correct?"

"...so, I've been seen through?"

No way, I didn't expect that my feelings for Tina could have been seen just like that. If I can speak about my true feelings, I love Tina. I don't want to betray her, who has been with me through better or worse.

"It's because I have fallen for you. Of course I can see it... Not only knowing it, I also used my father's proposal for myself. It's true that I have fallen for you, but more than that, if I stay by your side, I thought that I would be able to grow."

"Grow?"

"Yes. Even though I look like this, I have been assisting my father. However, it's just a duty, doing the same tasks over and over again. Nothing ever changes. If I can go to Kurt-sama's place, I can start something new. I believe that I'll be able to do a lot more. I do not wish to be a human being who just ends up as someone else's accessory."

I suspected that she wasn't just a young lady, but for her to think this far...

“I do not want to be misunderstood; it was never my intention to force marriage upon you. I think there is nothing as dull as a marriage without love. It’s only about using each other, having a guilty conscience, and feeling suffocated. Me, I do not wish for that kind of life. I want love in my marriage. That kind of desire probably disqualifies me as a noble’s daughter, though.”

“For you to say all of that while knowing my feelings and Tina’s, are you breaking off the engagement?”

“No, I won’t. Let’s try living together for a year. I will try my best to make you look at me. I won’t become a mere decoration. With my experience as my father’s assistant, I’m sure that I can become Kurt-sama’s support. Then, after a year, Kurt-sama shall decide. Whether you choose to marry me or not, I will not bear the slightest grudge. If I can’t make you to look at me after a year, the engagement will be nullified as per my request. I will be responsible for persuading Father. I won’t let any harm come to you.”

“This talk sounds too convenient for me.”

Yes, it is too beneficial for my part. There is no advantage at all for Faruno.

“Indeed, you’re right. This talk is too advantageous for Kurt-sama. For one year, you will be able to shield yourself from Margrave Fernande; you won’t be harmed for rejecting either. But, you see, even if I am to be turned down in the end, I will return to Fernande with all the things I will have learned from Kurt-sama for one year. This is my resolution.”

Faruno simply smiles. For the first time, I think that she looks “pretty”.

“Then, I will take advantage of your proposal.”

Contrary to what we did before, I’m the one who takes up her hand now. Faruno returns the grasp. With this, we truly seal the deal for our engagement.



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